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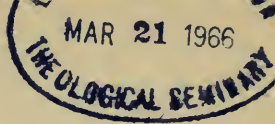
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The church and the times

THE CHURCH AND THE TIMES



THE
CHURCH AND THE TIMES
SERMONS

BY THE REV. ✓
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MODERATOR OF THE 115 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.

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PREFACE

WITH three exceptions, which are indicated in their respective places, the sermons in this volume were preached by the author to his own people. The theme of the first, from which the book receives its title, runs through them all. The local references here and there it is hoped the reader will kindly excuse. They could not be eliminated without in a measure robbing the sermons of their point and force. As a modest contribution to the cause of Evangelical Religion, they are given now to a wider public with the prayer that God may bless the gospel message they seek to proclaim.

ROBERT F. COYLE.

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“ . . . Men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do . . . expert in war . . . fifty thousand which could keep rank. . . . All these . . . came with a perfect heart to Hebron to make David king.”—1 CHRON. xii. 32, 33, 38.

THE story of David's mighty men is suggestive and striking. It reads like a romance. They are described as men of valour, men of understanding, men fit for the battle, expert in war, swift as the roes upon the mountains, perfect in heart, and men that could keep rank. Skilful, fearless, energetic, capable, loyal, united—given men of that sort, all bent upon the accomplishment of one thing, and they are irresistible. No matter what Philistine hosts may ring them around, they will break through to victory. What their captain commands, they will do; what he wants, they will secure. If he longs for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate,

* Delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Buffalo, N.Y., May 19, 1904.

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they will cut their way through all opposition and bring it. If a barley field falls into the hands of the enemy, they will drive him out or perish in the attempt. If there is a lion in a pit on a snowy day to be slain, or a giant of an Egyptian, whose spear is like a weaver's beam, to be disposed of, it shall be done. No dangers can frighten, no difficulties appal them. Such men must always win. In the present case their king was in exile, a fugitive from his throne, and the one thing they lived for, and planned for, and suffered for, was to conduct him to his crowning at Hebron. Everybody knows how completely victorious they were. Here, then, we have something that may be made to serve us a good turn to-day.

The first thing that emerges is their purpose—to make David king. It was this that united them, and inspired them, and transformed them into mighty men of valour. And this precisely is our purpose, the purpose of the Church, as to “great David's greater Son.” It seems a long way yet to fulfilment. The world rushes on after its idols and has no heart for its King.

“Our Lord is now rejected.
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned.”

But His ultimate and universal sovereignty is as certain as the purposes of God. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." He is to be enthroned in society, in education, in literature, in business, and among the nations. It stirs one's blood to think of it. The world's great poets and prophets, getting above earth's smoke and dust to the mountain-tops of rapt and inspired vision, have seen it coming, and have sung and spoken of it in words that are immortal. With wings unweighted by sordid gain and unbedraggled with the mud and dirt of the valley, they have risen into the clear skies of God, and reading the apocalypse of the future, have sent down the most optimistic reports to men and women of duller eyes.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run."

He is to be made King in the home. Divorce mills will cease to grind for lack of grists, and progressive polygamy, and Mormon polygamy, and everything else that slimes the sanctities of family life, will be burned away in the fires of His holiness. He is to be made King in the realm of commerce and capital, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. The

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kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents and lay them at His feet. He is to be made King in the realm of labour, and toilers everywhere will rejoice to bow down to the great Working Man of Galilee. He is to be made King in Zion. All differences of sect and denomination, all dividing lines of name and creed, will disappear, and from shore to shore the worshipping hosts of earth will "bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all." I am not over-drawing it, but falling far short of the glowing predictions contained in God's Word. No human tongue can do them justice.

And this, I say, is our work—to make Jesus King, first in our own lives and then in the lives of others, on and on, until all shall own His gentle sway. If this is not our work, to make Jesus King, we should stop praying "Thy kingdom come" and expunge the Lord's Prayer from our creed. But it is our work. For this we preach. For this we build our churches. For this we organise our campaigns. For this we maintain our boards and send out our missionaries. For this we educate and evangelise. And what a purpose it is! How every other ambition which men can cherish, every other object they may set before them, every other mark they may aim

at in life, pales in comparison with this! God's heart is in it. God's honour is staked upon its realisation. God's power is pledged to its triumphant accomplishment. It is inevitable that a purpose so noble, so transcendent, so Divine, should lift and transfigure and glorify those who, with a perfect heart, devote themselves to it.

But to successfully do the work which the proposed enthronement of Jesus involves, it is necessary to have understanding of the times. If our efforts are to be wisely directed and the emphasis of our activities rightly placed, we must know the drifts and currents of the world, the temper of the age in which we live, the difficulties to be overcome and the problems to be solved. Jesus is to be made King. As to the final issue, it is impossible for Christian men and women to doubt. But that is a very stupid and hurtful kind of optimism that shuts its eyes to present facts. Hope should not be blind. I have gone over the mountains enough to know that the road to the top of the range sometimes takes a dip into the valley, where shadows hang, and wild beasts howl, and serpents run among the rocks. Whether Israel to-day is in the valley or nearing the summit every man will judge for himself, according to his temperament and

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point of view ; but there are certain drifts which can hardly be mistaken.

Few things are more in evidence at the present time than the unrest of the masses. Their discontent increases. Their complaints grow louder and louder. Strikes multiply. The gulf between capital and labour widens, and, unless some solution is found, it is not pleasant to think what the outcome is likely to be. Nothing on the horizon at this hour is more significant than the rising power of the people. The era of the common man has come. Democracy is shaking thrones and compelling attention everywhere. The age-long mutterings of the masses have found a voice. They are speaking, and both Church and State are deaf if they do not hear. This is not something to lament, but something to thank God for, serious as it is. The disquietude of the labouring millions comes from what our mothers used to call "growing pains"; but growth, while full of promise, is also full of peril. The French Revolution was a growth. It came from the swelling of life—a life that shattered feudalism, and overturned the throne, and broke in pieces old tyrannies and old institutionalisms, and brought clouds and darkness and desolation with it as well as light. Our masses to-day

are pushing to the front, and in the push they are not stopping to concern themselves about who is elbowed aside, or what industries suffer, or what establishments go down. Of all the sovereigns on earth, I know of none more to be feared than King Demos.

It has been truly said by one of the most gifted men of this generation that Demos is on the box-seat and the master has to be taken where the driver pleases. In former days the man who paid the piper could choose the tune, but now he has to take whatever tune the piper elects and be thankful that the trombone is not thrown at his head as a finale. Unless this newly risen king is restrained and mollified and made reasonable by some holy and Divine influence, there is danger that he will become the most tyrannical, the most cruel of all oppressors. Already he scruples not to use torch and knife and dynamite, to burn and assassinate, to carry out his purposes, and having got a taste of power, it is dreadful to think of the lengths to which he may yet go.

Nothing in Europe in the last decade has been more noteworthy than the growth of socialism. It has come to be a tremendous force, and as it grows religion declines. Says Professor Vandervelde, the most brilliant and

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scholarly of all the socialist leaders on the other side of the Atlantic, "Slowly, but surely, with the irresistible movement of a geological subsidence, faith is waning among the industrial workers and among the peasants. . . . In Belgium, in France, in Germany, the workmen who follow no particular creed number hundreds of thousands—yea millions—and as their hopes of a heavenly kingdom dissolve other hopes assert themselves with growing intensity." In this country also the growth of socialism is rapid enough to awaken apprehension in the minds of all thoughtful people.

Now, the distressing thing about it all is that the drift of the masses is steadily away from organised Christianity. Not only are they largeiy alienated from the Church, but from alienation they have passed to animosity. No longer content to let the Church alone, they are attacking it, and reviling it, and stirring up hatred against it. They regard it, not as their friend, but as their enemy. They complain that it takes sides with the strong against the weak, with the rich against the poor, with those who are up against those who are down. They complain that in all their struggles for a larger, fuller and more tolerable life, they have received no help from

the Church ; and hence their attitude has become one of bitterness and hostility. How to conciliate these masses, how to take away their soreness and bring about a better understanding, is one of the hardest and most important problems confronting the Church.

Next to this, one can but note the drift of the people in general away from lofty ideals. It is something that should give us pause when conservative journals and conservative public men are constrained to characterise this as an "age of graft." Warnings have recently sounded out from both pulpit and bench against the money madness of our times. The President of the United States, in view of the public land frauds and postal speculations, has been forced to say that "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, will perish from the earth if bribery is tolerated." A distinguished prelate of the Roman Catholic Church declares that of all our sins as a people that of dishonesty is most pronounced. "The taint of it," he says, "is everywhere, from the manipulation of stocks to the adulteration of food and drink ; from the booming of towns and lands to the selling of votes and the buying of office ; from the halls of Congress to the policeman's beat ; from the

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capitalist who controls trusts and syndicates to the mechanic who does inferior work. It hangs like a mephitic air about our newspapers, our legislative assemblies, and the municipal government of our towns and cities."

These are not the words of hot-headed alarmists, but of men who have eyes to see and brains to think. Our ideals of honesty have gone down. The scramble for wealth has become a menace to our institutions and our liberties. Only let us have quick gains and fat dividends and not be too squeamish about fine scruples. Corner the market, water the stock, pocket the bribe, pinch, squeeze, filch from the green and gullible, take any road to the land of riches—only get there. So the Puritan conscience, which put rock foundations under this Republic, is gone, or going, and in its place has come the canker of fraud and knavishness. Extravagant notions of life, intemperate thirst for amusement, inordinate hunger for show and parade, are driving the people to all sorts of juggling and sharp practices to get money.

A part of this drift is the fading out of conviction. We have grown broad at the expense of depth. By an over-emphasis of latitudinarianism we have lost intensity.

Root is sacrificed to spreadth. Solidity is slain on the altar of sentiment. Men are calling themselves tolerant, when they are only tepid; liberal, when they are only luke-warm; charitable, when they are only cold. There is no end of froth-talk in rallies and conventions and union meetings to propitiate the gallery gods. The great verities of time and eternity are touched lightly, or skipped altogether, for the people must be entertained. Too often the most popular platform speaker is the one who has the largest fund of stories and is most skilful in the use of the rattle. The soiled and worn-out books in all of our public libraries are those that are stuffed with trash. The demand for works that foam and effervesce, that abound in exciting situations, that overflow with gush and doubtful morals, together with the grinning cartoon, the spicery of the stage and the yellow journal, indicates the drift.

Linked to this, its fruitage indeed, is the vanishing sense of sin. It is winked at and glossed over and condoned. There are no sinners any longer, and especially in the high places of respectability. If there are any lost people, they are down in the slums. The Ten Commandments are not supposed to apply anywhere above the submerged tenth. Our ideals

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of the home have gone down. We talk of Mormonism and affect a horror of it, as an unclean and loathsome thing; but as between a system that allows a man to have three or four ex-wives, or a woman to have three or four ex-husbands, and a system that permits a man to have his plural wives all at once, there is very little to choose. I am not sure but the odds are on the side of the Mormon. If this social scourge of easy divorce continues, it will call down upon us as a people the curse of Almighty God. You see this lowering of ideals as to the home in another direction. I trust it will not seem out of place to speak of it in a General Assembly. Wives are taking the place of mothers. Childless firesides are being substituted for family circles. The flat and apartment house and the club, together with certain social and prudential considerations, are robbing our married women of maternal instincts and ambitions. It is the ring of the telephone and not the cry of the baby that we hear nowadays. One of the greatest needs of our modern life is mothers.

Such is the drift of the times that a book like "Uncle Tom's Cabin," with its tremendous moral appeal, would probably fall flat to-day. Fine critics would in all likelihood pronounce

it inartistic, and learned reviewers, dominated by commercial considerations, would, no doubt, call it hysterical. About the only thing that can rouse the people to a white heat now is something that has to do with gain and money and material aggrandisement.

Our ideals of reverence have gone down. It is awful the liberty we take with things consecrated and venerated for ages. We laugh at everything. No position, no office, no calling, no relation in life escapes our satire. Nothing is sacred. The family, the court, the Church, the highest and holiest things are made sport of. Whether it be a wedding or a funeral, an ordination or a tragedy, a birth or a baptism, we find something to grow funny over. It is the cartoon age to which we have come. With our light and jaunty air, with our flippant handling of things sacred, with our universal irreverence, we are sowing the wind, and we shall reap the whirlwind. A laughing, mocking, cartooning age, an age that runs to lampooning and levitation, will soon run to the devil. A tree cannot stand without roots; it must grip the solid and substantial if it is to resist the storm and keep its branches in the sky. So precisely with men and nations. If they are not rooted in profound reverence for things

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good and high and holy, they must go down.

With this fading out of conviction and this lowering of ideals it is little wonder that indifference to religion should be so pervading and immovable. The world has no monopoly of it. Says an English writer: "As religion does not consume the lives of even those who go to church on Sundays, what does it amount to in the mind of the average man who does not believe himself an unbeliever?" The vast majority stay away from God's house, not because they are hostile to Christianity, but because they have ceased to have any interest in it. This nerveless unconcern is the hardest of all things to deal with. It is comparatively easy to meet an avowed enemy; his position is defined; he is positive, and we know just where to find him; but what can be done with the man who doesn't care? And if indifference on the outside is so discouraging, what shall be said of the indifference within the Church itself?

Most of us, I think, remember how that winter in Capua, after the battle of Cannæ, affected Hannibal. It did for him what all the hot sons of Italy, and all the snows of the Alps, and all the treachery of the Gauls, and all the skill and valour of the Romans could

not do. So long as he kept the field and lived a soldier's life, and endured hardness and strenuously devoted himself to duty, and maintained the strictest discipline, he was invincible. Victory was his constant companion. But one winter in Capua, with its ease and luxury and sumptuousness, shore away the strength of that mighty Samson, and left him weak and vulnerable in the hands of the Roman Delilah. For the most part the Church appears to be wintering in Capua, and to be losing, in luxurious living and in barrack-room enjoyments, the spirit of the old heroisms that made history. Certainly one looks in vain for any general enthusiasm. Far away in Northern Siberia I am told that they serve milk, not in liquid, but in frozen form; and shall I be unduly severe if I say that in too many of our Churches the milk of the Word is served in similar fashion, if, indeed, it is served at all? There is no heat, no fire, no passion, nothing but the shimmer of a light that chills. Intellectual coldbloodedness is in the fore, and under its opiate effects the people are dozing down to death.

Add to all this a decided drift toward externalism, and you have a catalogue of conditions that is well-nigh appalling. From the outside in rather than from the inside out is the

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tendency of the times. Vice is dealt with by a policy of repression rather than by moral education and the implanting of lofty ideals. The appeal is to law a good deal more than to conscience. Reformation is substituted for regeneration. Plasters are put upon the skin for poison in the blood. It is proposed to heal the hurt of the world by officialism and by congresses and conventions. Let us tinker and repair and cobble and fumigate and apply salves, and never mind about the interior springs of life. Let us have social settlements and neighbourhood houses and catching institutional features, and lay the emphasis upon environment, and the rest will take care of itself. Let us cleanse the turbid stream by laying out parks and planting flowers and building beautiful harbours upon its banks.

Thus the visible bulks vastly larger than the invisible, the natural than the supernatural. These are the days when revivals are "worked up." Programmes and printer's ink count for more than prayers. The machine is invoked rather than the Master. Noise and novelties and platform displays are esteemed more important than the quiet opening of the heart to the forces of the skies. Give us great meetings, great singing, great crowds, great demonstrations; let us have

wind, earthquake, and fire, and something is supposed to be done. But they pass and leave results that are most disappointing. The mountain has laboured and brought forth a little mouse. The rush of the wheel and the din of the mill are out of all proportion to the grist. What we are constantly tempted to overlook is the vital fact that it is "not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

Now, I have not touched upon these drifts and conditions to depress and dishearten. God forbid. This is not a dirge or a jeremiad. I am beating a charge. We have the same Cross and the same Gospel with which the early apostles overcame the world. To an age sunk in pleasure, steeped in sin, dead in conscience, and bankrupt in spiritual life they went forth and they conquered. The Christ that panoplied them and gave them victory can do the same thing for us. We have ten-fold more reason to be optimistic than they had. I have only sought to indicate where I think the emphasis of our work should be laid. In our Christian warfare, as in every other, if the enemy is to be dislodged and his strongholds broken down, our artillery must be rightly aimed. While I believe my diagnosis is true to fact as far as it has

gone, I do not hesitate to express the conviction that the times are ripe for a revival such as has rarely been witnessed in the history of the Church. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. No storm ever comes with such clarifying power as the one that comes after the deadeast calm. The world is growing weary of its follies. Thousands are getting tired of a mere yardstick and marketplace and amusement-seeking kind of a life, and are hungering for the bread which cometh down from heaven. Only let the right word be spoken in the right way, and with the right spirit, and the people will respond. In view, then, of prevailing conditions—

What ought Israel to do?

It seems perfectly clear that something more must be done than has yet been attempted to reach the masses. Whatever we may say about the sores of Lazarus, they are there, full of the poison of false theories and doctrinaire remedies, and unless an antidote is found, that which one of his own poets predicts may come to fulfilment: "For the Snow King"—and the Snow King here is the people—

"For the Snow King, asleep at the fountain,
Shall wake in the summer's hot breath,
And descend in his rage from the mountain,
Bringing terror, destruction, and death."

It is a tremendous figure, and shows where the thoughts of the leaders run. For this soreness of Lazarus Dives has no remedy. Political economy has none, socialism has none. There are nostrums enough, but nothing that will heal. If Lazarus is to be saved from his poison, if he is to rise to the level of the manhood that is his birthright, he must have the Gospel preached to him in sympathy and love. You cannot get the poison out of a man by external agencies and devices. It is poor business trying to clean out the well by painting the pump, or to sweeten the city's water by decorating the hydrant. Wake up the springs of justice, inspire the interior life with noble and unselfish purpose, introduce the mind of Christ, and the virus will give place to virtue, bitterness to blessing. The only remedy is the Gospel, platitudinous as the suggestion may seem. The Church, like her Master, must have compassion upon the multitude, must feel the sorrows and hardships which they feel, and by ways that are new, even odd and unconventional, or startling, if you please, take the Cross to the men of the shop and mill and mine and factory. By tent work, by open-air meetings, by gatherings in down-town halls, by the great-hearted

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inventiveness of a Divine philanthropy—in some way or other we must go out into the highways and hedges, out into the streets and lanes of the city, out to these struggling brother men of ours, and, by a kindness that is patient and tender and persistent, compel them to hear the story of the Crucified.

Then it is no less clear that something must be done to tone up the moral sense of the people in general. A restoration of ethical ideals is imperatively needed. Let conscience go down, and nothing is safe; let it go up and every interest of society is secure. And how shall the moral sense be quickened and made responsive to the skies? I am not here to find fault with our public schools and State universities. Within the limitations set for them by their heterogeneous constituency they are doing excellent work indeed. But after all our eulogies have been spoken, the fact remains that they do not touch the deep places of the moral Nature. Their work does not, as a rule, include anything positive in the way of religion, and all history shows that morality without religion can have neither root nor life.

Our system of public education deals with conscience rather by indirection than by intention, by negative influence rather than

by positive inspiration, deals with it on the side and incidentally, instead of making its development the main consideration. What I insist upon is that conscience cannot be kept awake and made sensitive and quick to perform its functions unless the nurture and training of it be entered upon as a serious business, and to undertake this without invoking the aid of religion is absurd. Deal with conscience as something apart, something secondary and subordinate, and it will inevitably yield to the lower forces of life and allow them to crowd it to the rear.

I am one of those who believe that there can be no conscience of any vitality and vigour that does not feed at the breast of religion. When ancient Rome laughed at her gods and suffered her altar fires to go out, her morality became worm-eaten with corruption and she collapsed beneath the weight of her own vices. Hence Israel ought to give immensely more heed to the cause of Christian education. This is really one of the most imperative duties of the hour. Both the growth of the Church and the stability of the State demand it. Our Christian colleges should be made vastly more efficient and attractive and others should be established at strategic points. This applies with

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special force to us as Presbyterians. In former years we were proud of our record as an educating Church, and we had a right to be; but when we consider our great wealth to-day and consider how we have been far out-distanced in the work of Christian education by other and weaker denominations, we are humiliated. We are compelled to write Ichabod upon our banners, for our glory has departed. Our whole system of denominational education needs to be reorganised and revitalised.

Certainly our work for young people in the Church and our standards of Sunday-school teaching should be greatly improved. Above all there should be a decided revival of religion in the home. A rebuilding of family altars, a restoration of the priesthood of the fireside, more prayer and more Christian instruction in the nursery—we must have these if conscience is to be elevated and enthroned in the lives of the people. *‘Pro aris et focis’* (“For our altars and our hearths”) was the old Roman war-cry. It called out all their courage, all their love, all their determination. Happy were it for America if this also were our war-cry, for only as the Republic rests upon these two, the altar and the home, can it be secure.

Israel ought to strengthen the moral convictions of the people, lead them away from the shallows into the depths; and how is this to be done? Certainly not by shading away the truth and making things easy. Stalwart souls are not made by smooth programmes. The great doctrines of sin and redemption should be rung out with no mistakable accent. We have had enough of invertebrate sentimentalism, enough of inflated speculation, enough of the exploitation of newspaper topics, enough of man's wisdom. Now let us get back to the wisdom of God—back to Jesus Christ and Him crucified; back to those fundamental truths of the Gospel that won every victory of the Church in the past; that made Huguenot and Covenanter and Puritan, and put the granite beneath all that is best in our civilisation, and that will win all the victories of the Church in the future. Nothing but the truth as it is in Christ can produce the conviction needed by our times, and nothing but conviction can invest men with conquering power and give them the keys.

So of the prevalent indifference, and the shocking irreverence and the tendency to rest in externalism. These conditions which I have touched upon rise up before us like

mountain barriers. Sometimes in our human weakness we look upon them and are discouraged. But even mountain barriers may be overcome and made to yield the greatest riches of all. What is needed to penetrate them and thread them with the highways of the kingdom, and write upon their gold and silver the image and superscription of God, is a heaven-born, thoroughgoing, unremitting evangelism. Give the people the Gospel and give it to them without apology. Give it to them without frills and without platitudes. Give it to them with all the earnestness of men who realise that they are engaged in rescue work. Give it to them straight. Give it to them in love. Preach to men as sinners whether they live on the avenue or in the slum. Preach to them tenderly as the lost whom Jesus came to save. Let us take the dryness out of our sermons with tears as Paul did. Only let there be tremendous conviction in the pulpit, and conviction will show itself in the pew, conscience will rise again from the dead, the cause of Christian education will awake, a holy, uplifting reverence will return, indifference will kindle into zeal, externalism will be burned away by fires flaming up from the interior, the poor will

have the Gospel preached to them, and the early triumphs of the Cross will be repeated. The spirit of a true evangelism is the spirit of God. It is Pentecost continued. Only let this spirit rise in the Church, and it will overflow into education, into benevolence, into missions, into union and co-operation, into the whole field of practical aggressive Christianity, and turn again our captivity as the spring sun lets loose the streams in the mountains, and sends them down to make glad the plains below.

But to do all these things and change these drifts Israel should cast about for great leadership. In the strenuous, driving, intense life of these times the mediocre must go to the rear. Business, literature, politics, the professions, none of these will have him. The days are too eager. Everything is heated, molten. The earth trembles beneath the feet of a thousand energies. This is no time for incompetents. Along every line the call is for ability, for men not only who can think and plan, but who can execute. And still more is ability needed in the ministry. It is the last place on earth for a third-rate man. Men mighty in leadership, splendidly proficient, fit for the battle, were the kind that made David

king at Hebron; and they are the sort to enthrone the Son of God.

But Israel has been too slow to see it. The Church has not been careful enough to select men of strength, men of real power, men with faces like the faces of lions to engage in the transcendent work of making Jesus king. It is poor policy to put a lame man in the pulpit to preach to laden people in the pews. What Israel needs to hasten the crowning of our Lord by human society is leaders both in the laity and ministry; men of consecration plus capability; men with vastly more than the permission of Presbytery to qualify them for service; men with courage enough to be themselves and yet with sanity enough to avoid the eccentric and the sensational as they would avoid the pestilence that walketh in darkness; men in spirit, in heroism, in conscious ability, and in sublime devotion to duty, like the Gordon Highlanders. Certain tribes in India were up in rebellion. To put them down it became necessary to storm the heights of Dargai. They occupied a hill one thousand feet high, covered with steep rocks. There was but one path, along which the soldiers of Britain must pass in single file. The Gordon Highlanders were detailed for the perilous work. Their qualities were well

known, and so the General said : " Men of the Gordon Highlanders, that position must be taken at all costs ; " and without a moment's hesitation the answer came back, " The Gordon Highlanders will take it. " In response to the simple appeal of duty, and proud of the stuff that was in them, they charged up the heights in the face of a terrific fire and swept everything before them. Men of that mettle and quality are always irresistible.

I believe the Church is ready to be appealed to, ready to answer, anxious to be directed. What she is waiting for is men to say " Forward, " and when the right kind of men say it, she will go forward, though the Red Sea and the wilderness lie in her path. Much is said about the falling off of candidates for the ministry ; but perhaps the ministry needs sifting even more than it needs recruiting. For this calling it is not enough to be good ; we must have men of might who know how to handle buckler and shield and make the most of the weapons with which God has furnished them. Not more of us, brethren ; that is not the greatest need ; but a better brand of us.

In thus indicating some of the drifts of the times and some of the difficulties in the way

of Christian progress, and in venturing to point out what Israel ought to do, I have spoken in no pessimistic mood. The Lord's army is not sounding a retreat. The forces of Zion have no notion of striking their colours. Our rejected King is on the way to His crowning. Notwithstanding all I have said, and all that can be said on that side, the tides of goodness are rising. This is God's world and God will have it. There are clouds in the sky a good deal bigger than a man's hand, and it is no part of wisdom or of duty to close our eyes to them. Iniquity abounds. Crime stalks through the land. Mobocracy mocks at justice. Irreverence grins in the face of God. Mammon grinds. Shylock demands his pound of flesh. Lust invades the sanctuaries of virtue. Easy divorce undermines the home. This is certainly no time for an easy-going optimism to rest upon its oars and say, "All is well."

But far less is it a time for croaking doubt and pessimistic fear. Jesus Christ is marching on. Truth is overcoming error. Virtue is outrunning vice. Light is spreading. Christianity is in the ascendent. To-day, after all the centuries of criticism and attack, after scepticism and unbelief have done their utmost, after the strength of materialistic

rationalism has become exhausted—to-day, at the very centre of all our culture and glory, in the midst of all our systems and philosophies, of all our engines and telegraphs and inventions—nay, not only in the midst, but supreme above them all, gradually winning the homage and love of men, walks the Christ, and with a gentleness that cannot be expressed, and a power that cannot be resisted, and a majesty that cannot be described, is moving towards His coronation. I look out through the mists of the future and I see Him coming. I hear Him in the unrest of the masses. If the industrial world is yeasting and fermenting, Christ is the leaven in the lump. The principles of the Cross are working. I see Him in the movement for Church union, and hear His prayer “that they all may be one,” growing louder and more passionate as the days slip by.

Out through the darkness and the confusion and the clash of a thousand interests I see Him—see Him treading the waves of the world’s battling deep, moving upon the face of our social and national waters, walking in the greatness of His strength, on the way to His enthronement. By and by some later generation, bringing in the last trophies of our Conquering King, will pass the enrap-

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turing word along the whole line of redeemed humanity, and a great multitude of all nations and kindreds and tongues will take up the shout, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Hallelujah! The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen."

THE MISSING NOTE IN MODERN
PREACHING



THE MISSING NOTE IN MODERN PREACHING *

“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—LUKE xix. 10.

“As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.”—JOHN xvii. 18.

HERE in these two passages we have concisely stated Christ's mission and ours, if we are His followers. He tells us that He came to save lost men, and that what He came to do we are to continue. Words can make nothing clearer. But this evangelistic purpose the Church in our day has too much lost sight of. It has not been persistent and persuasive in its pleadings with men to give up their sins and lay hold of Jesus Christ for salvation. Dr. Ian Mac-laren declared two or three years ago that this is the missing note in the pulpits of the present day. The preaching of our times is intellectual; it is what we sometimes

* Delivered before the Bible Conference at Winona Lake, Indiana, in August, 1903.

mistakenly call up-to-date; it exploits questions of the hour; it is newspaperish; it deals with current problems and issues and views and speculations, with things that are thrown to the surface, with the flotsam and jetsam that float about upon the wave, rather than with the great, deep, spiritual realities that underlie all life and all conduct, and that determine what personal character and human society shall be.

The reason why the early apostles turned the world upside down, the reason why the reformers were so mighty, the reason why the Wesleys started a ground-swell of power that is still rolling across the earth, was because they preached to men as sinners and urged them with burning tongues and lips of fire to flee to the refuge of the Cross. They were irresistible because they dealt, not with transient phases of life, but with the great central and eternal facts. It was not questions of the hour with them, but questions of the ages, not events of the passing day, talked about in the club and on the street corner, but matters that dipped away into the eternities. They sounded out the everlasting Gospel and brought to the people a message as deep as the heart of God.

For a good many years, it has to be con-

fessed, this old note of Calvary has been too feebly heard, or missing altogether. For the explanation of it we must turn to criticism, to sacerdotalism, to pride of intellect, to growing wealth and worldliness, to materialism, to the persistent tendency in man to stop with forms, and to various other causes. But now, thank God, all signs go to show that we are at the dawning of a new era, that the missing note of evangelism is coming back and is soon to head the whole chorus of modern Christianity in ringing out the grand music of the Gospel. Evidences are multiplying that the Church is tired of what is negative, sick of criticism and speculation, and is hungering for the positive, the aggressive, the real. Not sentiment, but service; not subjective theorising, but objective fact; not an academic or a lecture-room atonement discussed in leading articles and theological reviews, but an atonement as real as Calvary and filled with all the saving efficacy of the Christ who died there—this is what the Church is beginning to long for. It is beginning to cry out once more for preachers to stand in the pulpit with the message of God—preachers to rebuke men boldly for their sins in the name of the Lord—preachers to assure the penitent

of Divine mercy—preachers to declare with confidence that Christ has finished the work of salvation, and to offer that salvation without money and without price to all who believe. For the breaking of this new day many have been longing and praying, and now that they see its light along the east they thank God and take courage.

At our late meeting of the General Assembly nothing was so pronounced as the spirit of evangelism. With services in the interests of this great cause the Assembly began, and with similar services it ended. Between these two banks all its currents ran and all its work was done. Nothing like it has ever been witnessed in the history of the Church. Our last meeting was a tremendous throng of four thousand people gathered in Hazard's pavilion to listen to evangelistic addresses. From this meeting the multitudes overflowed to the little plaza across the street where men of power spoke to them in the name of Jesus. Commissioners said to one another with profound joy and thanksgiving, "This marks the beginning of a new era in our beloved Church." It was felt that the evangelistic influences of that day and of that Assembly would go out into all the land. Once a year, at Easter, the Patriarch of the

Greek Church goes down into the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Breathless, great crowds await his return. Finally he emerges from the gloom with a lighted torch lighted by the tapers for ever burning in that holy place. Eagerly the people press around him to light their torches, and having lighted them, away they go, bearing the sacred flame, throughout the country. So our ministers and elders returned from the General Assembly to scatter the fires of evangelism from sea to sea and to send them far away into the regions beyond.

1. First of all let us be very clear as to what evangelism is. The word itself reveals its significance. It means the preaching of good news, and that good news is the offer of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ our Lord. To criticise, to deal in negations, to speculate and theorise, to indulge in ethical platitudes, to scintillate with literary brilliants set in religious framework, to conduct solemn and dignified Church services—none nor all of these is evangelism. Jesus gave us the very essence of it when He said, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." No pulpit is evangelical that does not set before it that programme and faithfully endeavour to carry it out.

If it has no good news to tell, no salvation to offer, to those who are lying under the burden of human misery, to those who are feeding among the swine, to those who are in bondage to sin in avenue and slum alike, to those who are wounded and thirsting and despairing by the waysides of life, however orthodox it may be, it lacks the vital, the inspiring, the uplifting thing that always accompanies evangelism.

Evangelism—I will tell you what it is. It is God's love seeking lost men. It is John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the Good Shepherd in the fifteenth of Luke, leaving the ninety and nine, and going after that which was lost—going through thorns and briers, going where the wolf howls and the wild beast has his lair, going over rock and crag, over torrent and river, over steep places, with blistered feet and torn garments—how far? How long? *Until He find it.* On He goes, and on, through bog and swamp, through tangle and thicket—*until He find it.*

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,

Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed
through

Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Out in the desert He heard its cry—

Sick and helpless and ready to die.”

In response to that cry, perhaps not framed into syllables, perhaps not heard by mortal ears, but sounding down in the solitudes of the soul, He is still crossing the deep waters and still passing through the dark night, seeking to save. Such is the evangelism of Christ, and such should be the evangelism of all who bear His name.

Evangelism is obedience to our Lord; it is carrying out the great commission. His last word to His disciples before He ascended was, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”—which was precisely the same thing as saying, “Go evangelise.” Hence evangelism is the spirit which says, “Here am I, O Lord, send me.” It is Paul, eager to go anywhere, to suffer any hardship, to be all things to all men that by all means he might save some. It is John Knox crying out, “Give me Scotland or I die.” It is Livingstone dying on his knees for Africa. It is John G. Paton giving his life for the cannibals of the New Hebrides. In one word, evangelism is Jesus who came

to seek and to save that which was lost continued in His followers. It is the fountain-head of Christianity, the source from which all its growth, all its conquest, all its enlargement proceed. Evangelism is to our religion what our mines and farms and forests are to commerce. It furnishes the raw material out of which all Christian expansion and civilisation are produced. If the kingdom of God is to come on earth, men and women from the world must be brought under the King's sway, recruits from the ranks of sin and unbelief must be led to the Saviour, the lost sheep must be saved—and that is evangelism.

So that to sneer at this movement, or to make light of it, or to ignore it as a phase of fanaticism, is as though the furniture man should despise the wood-chopper, or the house-builder despise the quarryman, or the manufacturer of coin despise the gold and silver miner, or the dealer in woollen goods despise the sheep-raiser. That is certainly a very strange kind of wisdom that pours contempt upon sources of supply. As well might the broad river sneer at the little mountain rills, or the flour mill sneer at the reaper in the wheat fields, as for people in the Church or out of the Church to sneer at evangelism.

2. And this leads me to speak of its need. That the Church cannot grow by simply turning its own wheels goes without saying. There can be no extension of Christianity unless there is encroachment upon the world. Outsiders must be laid hold of and converted into insiders if religion is not to remain at a standstill. No country is ever invaded and conquered by an army whose soldiers do nothing but mark time. There must be aggression if there is to be conquest. These, of course, are elementary facts, but it will not do to overlook them. Your brick manufactory out there on the hillside is not more necessary to the building of houses and the extension of the city than evangelism is necessary to the growth of the Church.

There are people sometimes calling themselves Christians who are most unsparing in their criticism of evangelists. They laugh at their pleadings and attack their programmes and regard their methods with scorn and contempt. They have no use for them, and to invite them into a community meets with their unqualified disapproval. Because the work of evangelism has been abused; because adventurers and impostors and shrewd professionals have occasionally made use of it to promote their own advantage;

because by foolish leadership it has now and then done harm, some dignified Church members and Church officers have condemned it altogether. But that extreme is just as unwise and just as much to be discountenanced and denounced as the other. Philip did not give up evangelising because Simon the sorcerer sought to turn the business into a scheme for money-making. In spite of the abuses of Simon he went right on preaching the Gospel and saving men with greater earnestness than ever. Paul did not stop evangelising because the seven sons of Sceva tried to imitate him, evidently for selfish purposes. Moses and Aaron did not abandon their work of seeking deliverance for the people because the magicians of Egypt did also in like manner with their enchantments.

It is the worst kind of folly to allow the abuse of a thing to condemn its use. I wish some of the critics of evangelism would tell us how the Redeemer's kingdom is to be extended and how the unbelieving are to be led to embrace the faith without evangelistic effort. Will they come of their own accord? Will they throng to our Churches and eagerly ask for admission? Nay, verily. If they come at all, they must be invited, they must be urged, they must be sought

after. It always has been so. It always will be so. Hence the need of evangelism will continue until the last trump shall sound and the present dispensation passes away. Without it the Church must die of stagnation and Christianity perish from the earth.

Evangelism is needed to arouse the Church. Everywhere we hear the complaint of indifference. Men and women professing Christ are living in Laodicean unconcern. Whether Christianity advances or recedes, whether Christ loses or wins, whether men accept Him or reject Him, is nothing to them. They are as cold as the stones in a graveyard, unresponsive, unenthusiastic as statues of marble. From ministers in every part of the country comes the same testimony. The great majority of their Church members are at ease in Zion. They are like the Roman soldiers on Calvary, of whom it is said, after they had nailed Jesus to the tree, "And sitting down they watched Him there." In all literature there is not a more cold-blooded statement than that—at the very heart of it, stolid, unfeeling, unmovable indifference. Let Him suffer, let Him bleed, let Him die—what is it to them? "And sitting down they watched Him there."

The soldiers are gone, but their spirit of insensibility to Christ and His claims is with us yet, and that, too, among those who bear His name. He still prays on the mountain and His locks are wet with the dews of the night; still calls for workers to enter the white harvest fields; still says to those who profess to be His friends, "Take ye away the stone;" still agonises in the garden; still suffers on the cross—"And sitting down they watched Him there." He tells us that by virtue of His relation to humanity, a relation which makes Him bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, in the suffering of the heathen He suffers; in the pain of the benighted and miserable He is pained; in the degradation and woe of the pagan millions, He is afflicted. He tells us that He feels on His own back the crack of the slave-driver's whip in Africa, feels the torture of foot-binding in China, feels the pangs and horrors of the caste system in India, feels in His own soul the piercing cry of the slum children of the world; and yet in the face of this plain teaching of the Word of God tens of thousands of Church members are stone-deaf to the appeal of missions. It is nothing to them that the Saviour's heart aches—"And sitting down they watched Him there." Surely,

surely He deserves better treatment from those who claim to be enlisted soldiers of the Cross.

But there is the fact. Indifference, unconcern, apathy, toward every point of the compass. It is breaking the hearts of ministers. It is discouraging Church sessions. It is depleting Sunday Schools. It is killing missionary societies. I am simply repeating what I have read and what I have heard. And what is the remedy? From all quarters comes the answer—Evangelism. It is felt that we must have Pentecostal preaching, and Pentecostal soul-winning, and Pentecostal loyalty to Jesus Christ, if ever this great indifferent mass of Church membership is to be warmed into life and drawn into service. It is felt that the fires of evangelism must be kindled if December conditions are ever to give place to the fruitfulness and beauty of summer.

Evangelism is needed to give Christian people definiteness of aim. When two or three years ago an American captain was training his soldiers for service in Cuba, as they went through the woods he often had them engage in make-believe warfare. But always he would say to them, "Don't shoot blindly. Aim at something." It was that

training and that spirit that gave them success a little later on the real battlefield. The great difficulty in our Churches to-day is a lack of definiteness. There is no end of shooting; heavy artillery and light artillery sounding out continually, but there are few spoils, few trophies of victory, because we do not aim at something. What we need is an object, a purpose, something to work for, something on which to focalise our energies, and call out all that is best in us; and this we can find in evangelism.

What can give more definiteness of aim than efforts to win men to Jesus Christ? A work of that kind would concentrate us and consecrate us and fill our Church-going and Church connection with infinite meaning. As they are now they signify very little for a good many of us. But suppose we were to set before ourselves the definite, the Divine task of recruiting for the Lord, of earnestly inviting men and women to Jesus Christ, of electioneering for our great Candidate, how it would strengthen our faith and dignify our Church life and make it count for something in the estimation of both God and man!

This is what used to be called saving the lost, and to that old phraseology we need to return again. For if this Gospel is true, and

the Lord Jesus is true, there are lost men. If not, to talk about salvation and about evangelism is to talk nonsense. But nothing in this world is more in evidence than the fact of lost manhood and lost womanhood. We see them everywhere. Not simply in the slums. Not simply in pagan lands. But along our avenues, and in what is called society—men and women sodden with sin, soggy with worldliness, living in a state of refined and respectable animalism, dead to God, dead to the spiritual and the eternal, with every skylight of their lives closed.

Never was the field of evangelism larger and never was its work more needed than at this hour. It is needed to commend Christianity to the world. For say what you will, the unbelieving, the ungodly, the agnostic, the lovers of pleasure, have nothing but contempt for a Christianity that is not aggressive. When they see it shut up within Churches; when they see it indifferent, self-complacent, self-satisfied, professing to be the agent of a salvation which it does not seek to apply, in their hearts they despise it. If it is to win their respect and arrest their attention and awaken their thought, it must repeat Jesus Christ, and, in every way open to human ingenuity, seek to save the lost.

Suppose this spirit were to come into our present-day Christianity, suppose the old note struck by the apostles and reformers should be struck again. Suppose our Churches in every city were to go out from their stereotyped arrangements and stately programmes in their eagerness to win souls. Suppose, instead of being content to stand on the defensive and hold their own, they should shake themselves from their indolence and carry the war into Africa. In that case the stock of Christianity would go up a thousand per cent. with men of the world, and its influence over human society would be a thousandfold increased.

Well, so far as our own denomination is concerned there are signs that such a time is coming. The tides of evangelism are rising. The note, missing so long, is sounding out again. Who has not read about how the old chieftain of Scotland rallied his followers for the battle? A fiery cross was sent over mountain and glen. Messenger passed it to messenger with the word, "Speed forth the signal, clansman, speed." It glanced like lightning through the forest. It sped over hill and dale. At sight of it the farmer left his field, the hunter his game, the fisherman his boat, and hastened to the muster-place to

strike for his chief. So in our beloved Church to-day the messengers of Christ are passing the signal along. They are rallying the people, gathering the clans of Calvary, preparing for a great forward movement in soul-winning.

You remember the thrilling story of the mutiny in India—how the men and women and children shut up in Lucknow longed for the coming of the British soldiers. There they were suffering, starving, suffocating, exposed to the brutal tortures and insults of a brutal enemy. But one day when in the last extremity of distress, a Scotch lassie, in what seemed to be a kind of delirium, cried out, “Dinna ye hear the pibroch? Dinna ye hear the pibroch?” Her quick ear caught the sound of bagpipes, and soon Sir Colin Campbell and his brave Highlanders were seen coming to the rescue, their colours flying in the wind. The imprisoned wept for joy. So the listening ear of faith can hear the coming music of evangelism with its glorious gospel of deliverance. Soon the missing note will be heard again; and it is because I want this great multitude to catch it up, to join the chorus, to fall in line, that I speak these words to-day.

POWER FROM ON HIGH

POWER FROM ON HIGH*

“Until ye be endued with power.”—LUKE xxiv. 49.

“And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”—ACTS i. 8.

WE all know what power is in its relation to the things of this world, and the eagerness with which men are everywhere seeking it. If we ask why it is that so much is made of wealth or position or education, the answer is found in the word “power.” There is something in money, and in high official or social standing, and in a thoroughly trained mind that gives leverage and immensely widens the scope of a man’s influence. The mechanic who as a worker at the bench is unknown outside of a very small circle, is recognised as a power in the State when by some lucky hit he becomes a millionaire. Education and position are also large contributors of power. We send our children to school and college in order that, by discip-

* Delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Los Angeles, California, May 18, 1903.

line and training, they may lay up strength. Education is a process of power-storing. We put it away in the shape of reserves of force, and in after years draw upon it to give us victory in the stress and strain of life's struggles. Power is a great word, therefore, even in its lower uses and applications. Painter, musician, orator, politician, book-writer, professor—every man wants power. It is considered something worth striving after with the sweat of blood-drops.

But beyond all this there is another sort of power, as much higher as heaven is higher than earth. It is the kind of power referred to by our Lord, and which He told His disciples to tarry for in Jerusalem. We call it spiritual power, but I suspect we are not always clear as to just what that is. It would greatly simplify matters if we could get hold of the idea that spiritual power is no other than the will of God streaming into us and becoming our will. All through the ages gone this eternal will has streamed into institutions and personalities. Now it has flashed out in prophetic illumination, now become the mover in some epoch-making reformation, and now of some great religious awakening. Society has been lifted and purified just in proportion as it has opened itself to this

stream of the Divine purpose. Every improvement in social conditions, every movement to elevate and save the masses, every endeavour to Christianise the heathen, every step of progress toward the brotherhood of man, has been caused by the in-streaming of the will of God. These things are done by the push of the very forces that rule in the heart of the eternal Father.

Go, for example, into a great mill, or factory. At one end are the huge engine and driving wheel. At the other are scores, perhaps hundreds, of machines standing still. There is no lack of power in the engine and no lack of willingness in the engineer to pass it along to the factory, but still the machines are motionless. What is the matter? Simply this: the great belt which transmits the power from the engine to the factory has not been slipped on. Let that be attended to and immediately every wheel begins to turn and something is done. Now spiritual power, as I understand it, is simply belting my will on to the will of God. The man who does that most completely, who keeps the belt most tight, so that the power lost in transmission is reduced to a minimum, is always the mightiest spiritual force. Most of us are weak because

the belt is either off altogether, or so slack and loose that it carries very little of the power of the engine over into the factory. Now if I am right in my definition, it will be in order to enlarge for a moment or two upon—

I. *The Source of this power.* The Saviour calls it “power from on high” and the “power of the Holy Ghost.” But when He makes use of such expressions we are not to imagine that spiritual power has one fountain and material power another. In all the universe there is but one eternal mover. The force behind Niagara, or behind the tides, or tempests, or stars, is the same as that which is behind every baptism of the spirit, and every revival of religion, and every ingathering of souls, viz., the will of God. The very will which in one direction propels the planets in their courses, and holds the oceans within bounds, and lifts the mountain ranges against the sky, and sends all the rivers singing to the sea, in another direction is working to build up a kingdom of souls and to bring mankind into harmony with itself. The same will that bids the lily grow, and hangs the cluster on the vine, and rewards the labour of the husbandman, is the will that energises the Church and clothes with might her Pauls and Wesleys and Moodys.

The driving power of creation is one, and whether I preach or operate a street-car system, whether I undertake to lead a soul to Christ or to talk through a telephone, if I am to have any success I must draw upon that fountain-head. So that when we talk of spiritual power we are no more in the region of mystery than when we talk of electric power, or chemical power, or any other kind of power. All proceed from the same will, and all become practically mighty only when the laws of that will are obeyed.

II. Now, the source being what it is, the power is *constant*. One of our very common expressions nowadays is the *generation of force*. We see a dynamo of large dimensions down in the lower part of the city, and we say, "That is where the power is produced that lights our homes and stores or that drives our cars or pumps our water." Or we see a thousand wheels turning in Buffalo or thereabouts, and we say, "The power that does all this is generated by Niagara's cataract." But that is a very lax and liberal use of language, and can be tolerated only by courtesy. ^{Man} Man simply discovers and utilises forces which have been in the world from the beginning. Steam and electricity and magnetism are not something new.

The locomotive, and the telephone, and the mariner's compass, and all the other wonders of invention were in Eden. We have nothing to-day the possibilities of which have not always existed.

So This ^{sub}power about which I am speaking is a ^{fixed} quantity—as fixed ^{as} the will of God. It does not come and go, emerge and disappear, ebb and flow like the tides, but is the same in fulness yesterday, to-day, and for ever. By forgetting this fact men are sometimes led into absurdities and religious extravagances which, to say the least, are misleading. A simple reference to the phrases, “the baptism of the Spirit,” and “the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost,” will serve to indicate what I mean. Christian people have often wrought themselves up to a great pitch of excitement, and exhausted themselves with emotional fervour under the impression that these things were necessary to bring in the reluctant tides of spiritual power. They have acted on the assumption that God's will is impulsive, intermittent, variable. Frequently in the joss-houses of San Francisco I have seen the Chinamen come in and ring a bell to call up the sleeping or absent gods. And much the same thought, I fear, has sometimes been in the minds of the followers of Christ.

They have acted as though they believed that their God is a God of moods and whims.

This, I think, has been one great weakness in the Church. Instead of grasping and holding on to the idea that this spiritual power is constant, that the Divine tide is always at the full, ready to stream into any creek, or cove, or channel, or bay that is open to it, the feeling has been that it must be induced and coaxed and won back by bell-rings and excitements of one kind and another. Now, the scientific man is more wise. He does not interpret his forces in that way. "The electrician," as another has said, "never expects to get the power he is in search of by excitement, nor does he look for a sudden visitation of it, as though the invisibles he dealt with acted purely on caprice. Instead, he works quietly in a given direction, sure that by obeying the known conditions he will be re-enforced by the power he invokes." That is to say, he believes in the steadiness, the continuity, the unfailing constancy of the force he is seeking to harness and apply. And I know of nothing more needed by Christian people than a similar faith in the invariableness of this "power from on high."

As one goes back along the pathway of

Church history he frequently runs upon men who served as great spiritual power-centres for the times in which they lived. They were so filled with the Holy Ghost that they communicated Divine life and enthusiasm to multitudes who come in contact with them. Like the heavily charged battery that sends its currents flashing through a hundred wires, or, like the reservoir, fed from the mountains, that makes the fields around green and fruitful with its numerous issuing streams, so these Spirit-filled personalities became distributors of the very power of God.

Of this sort were the saintly Baxter, the rapturous Rutherford, the heavenly-minded Summerfield, the consecrated Nettleton, and scores of others whose names will readily occur to you. To come into the presence of such men was immediately to feel the glow and spell of something Divine. But of all the spiritual power-centres of history Jesus stood supreme. It was as though the very heavens had emptied themselves into Him. And if we look for the explanation of the pre-eminent spiritual power of the men just indicated, and especially of our Lord, we shall find it in the fact that they believed the Source on which they had to draw was as constant as the stars, and kept themselves in constant communication with it.

III. A word now as to the availability of this "power from on high." The Bible certainly teaches that it is a resource intended for use, something to be drawn upon continually. Jesus would not allow His disciples to enter upon their work until they had it. As well for the bird to try to fly without wings, or the ship to sail without wind or steam. This power was everything. The question, then, as to its availability is in the highest degree practical. May you, may I, be a reservoir of Divine energy, a battery charged with Heaven's own electricity, and so become a spiritual power-centre in my own Church and my own community? The answer is rightly affirmative, but how? Let me throw light upon the matter by means of an illustration or two.

Some time ago, in one of our magazines, I read of a machine invented in Southern California for the purpose of directly utilising the sun's rays in such a way as to make them pump water for irrigating the fields. They were caught on a broad disc, and by a clever arrangement of mirrors and reflectors so concentrated that their heat propelled the engine that did the pumping. It was said to be a great success. But I noticed that the power of the engine depended upon the extent of

the receiving surface which it turned toward the sun whose rays rained down upon it.

Now that is suggestive. The great difficulty with too many of us preachers and Church members is that the receiving surface which we present to God is small, and hence our gift of power is small. A vast deal of our manhood and womanhood is turned away from God. By selfishness, by worldliness, by lack of self-sacrifice and brotherliness, our spiritual receptivity is very limited, the up-turned vessel has little capacity. The reason why our Saviour kept the early disciples waiting there in Jerusalem was that this receiving surface might be enlarged, that their whole nature might lie open to the beams of the Divine power. That is what they were doing in the upper room during those ten days—expanding the receiving surface, removing everything that would not gather up and reflect the rays of the Spirit, getting rid of the flesh, emptying themselves; and when at last, by prayer and supplication, their whole being was receptive and responsive, they were endued with power and went forth from that upper room to sway the multitudes, to win thousands to Jesus Christ, and to work wonders among the people.

Or I might illustrate the same thing in

another way. There was a man who had on his estate a beautiful lake. It was supplied with pure water from the mountains not far away. The lake and its surroundings were charming. Flowers in great varieties grew on its banks, birds sang in the trees, and troops of merry children romped and played in the delightful grounds. The owner of the lake was a man of God and loved his fellow-men. Over the entrance to the enchanting place he had this sign up, "All are welcome." Men and women, tired and care-worn, often went in to rest. The lake and its environment refreshed them and eased them of their burdens; and when they turned homewards they breathed a benediction upon the big-hearted proprietor.

And not only so, but the cattle and sheep grazing in the neighbourhood were blest by the lovely spot. The lake received such abundant supplies from the hills that it overflowed and went out in a full, rich stream through the fields below, and the flocks and herds feeding there had plenty of pure mountain water to drink. On and on went the stream from the overflow, bearing joy and gladness for miles down the valley.

But one day the owner of the lake started for a foreign land to be absent many months.

Before going he rented his estate to a neighbour of hard, practical nature who did not want to be bothered with the work of keeping up a park that would yield no money returns. He had no time to take care of a place that would bring him no income. So the crystal water from the mountains was cut off. The old welcome sign was taken down and this put up in its place, "No trespassing on these grounds." A change came over everything. The flowers faded, the grass withered, the birds sought more congenial surroundings, the fish in the lake died as the waters dried up, the air was filled with offensive odours, no children came in to play, or weary men and women to rest, and the flocks and herds below were deprived of their pure mountain water—the entire place lost its beauty and its glory.

Thus the whole difference was brought about by cutting off the water supply from the hills. Now, if any of us are in the condition of that dried-up lake and its withered and unattractive surroundings, we can easily see the reason why. Our connection with the springs of God is cut off. We are not open to the stream of the Eternal Will; and so we are weak, our lives are barren and unfruitful. Or it may be the sluice-gate

is lifted just a little, far enough to let only a very small amount of water trickle through, but there is no overflow and no power. People are not drawn to us and won to Christ, because our lives are without spiritual force and beauty. Too often they are rented estates, let out to the world, to pride, and fashion, and display—tenants who care only for themselves—and so they lie withered and desolate before the eyes of God and men.

It is not difficult, then, to see what must be done to make the power of the Holy Ghost available. We must lift the sluice-gate. We must open ourselves, our minds, our wills, our hearts, all our powers and faculties, to the Spirit of God. "If any man will open——" This is what I understand by the baptism from above. It is simply a case of opening, of becoming receptive, of removing obstructions. Do that, and the power will come. How often I have seen along the sea shore little scum-covered puddles which, by an accumulation of filth and *débris*, had been cut off from the play of the tides. There they were rotting and festering, breeding malaria and death. What they needed to cleanse and to transform them was to open up the channels and let in the pure water of the pulsing ocean. And that is what we

ministers and elders and Church members need. To open up the channels, to lift the sluice-gate, is not easy. It means sacrifice, means self-denial, means long waiting in some upper room, means exhausting prayer and supplication; but to do it, to feel the pulse of God's oceanic heart throbbing in us and inspiring us, to feel and know that our little pools on the shore are one with the Infinite Sea—the tides pouring in and out—is an experience worth a thousandfold more than it costs to secure it.

IV. And now the *need* of this "power from on high." Significant for all time was our Lord's command to "tarry in Jerusalem." Failure at the outset would have buried the infant Church beyond all hope of a resurrection. He saw how necessary it was that the disciples should succeed, and succeed so conspicuously as to lift them and their cause into a prominence, an importance upon the horizon, that would compel attention.

And what did He do? Please note it well. He gave them no instruction as to methods. He put into their hands no elaborate programme—no programme at all except to begin there in the city, and not to begin until the pressure of Divine power was upon them. He outlined no campaign. I

find in the record no bill of directions as to how they should proceed, or what order they should follow, or how their evangelising should be done.

He simply kept them waiting—waiting for power, waiting for an inflow of the Spirit, emptying the vessels, and turning them upward to be filled from above. Well did He know that when the power came the methods would take care of themselves. They would preach with burning tongues to the multitudes, and not only so, but would be direct and personal, individual going after individual. Life will always organise itself. Only let us have the life and that life will crystallise into plans and programmes. Only let us have the Divine life pulsing through us and Divine work will be done. I believe with all my heart that if we spent half as much time praying as we do planning, half as much time waiting upon God as we do working at machinery, Pentecost would come again and great waves of revival sweep over the land. Not by might, nor by power; not by clever human agencies and devices; not by committees and correspondence—all these are good and wise in their place—but the supreme need of the hour, the one thing without which all else must fail, is the infilling of the Spirit of God.

This need, I say, is imperative, never more so than at the present time. It is emphasised by the unyielding indifferentism of the age, by the apathy of the Church, and by our own coldness as followers of Christ. Go into our marts of trade, into those Venices where buyers and sellers most do congregate, into society, into the club, listen to the talk of the people, catch the drift of their thought, the prevailing trend of their desires, and see how tremendous is the grip of worldliness. Even our Church members, for the most part, seem to be reckoning in terms of markets, and money balances, and of the passing pleasures of the day. To thousands of them the theatre is immensely more attractive than the temple of God; the fashionable social function immensely more important than a meeting to plan for world-evangelisation; the goddess of dress an hundredfold more popular than the God-man of Galilee.

Look around you. Take the measure of the men and women you meet. Watch their conduct. Note the things that interest and absorb them, the things that they freely spend their money for, and if you form a judgment at all, it must be that the unseen values, the great spiritual realities of life,

are so discounted that in multitudes of instances they are simply *nil*. The religion of the Crucified, and all its concomitants, are rated as cheap goods, mere shoddy compared with what the world has to offer, and there are few buyers at that counter. Sabbath observance in any high spiritual sense is a thing of the past. The fourth commandment has lost its sanctions. Sinai no longer smokes and thunders. The people have ceased to tremble at God's tokens. Never before was the rush of life so intense, but it is not the rush after goodness. Sports, pleasures, material gains, and animal excitements most engage the dreams of the present generation. The ideals of the people are low. Soul qualities seem to be declining, and when the soul, either of a nation or an individual, goes down the vultures will soon gather.

Are the colours too dark? Am I putting too much shade in the picture? Look and ponder for yourselves. No one is more optimistic than myself. I believe with all my heart that the general trend and current of things is upward, and always upward. I believe that, on the whole, this year is better than last, and that last year was better than the year before. But my read-

ing of history has taught me that oftentimes the road to the heights takes a dip into the valley, that here and there along the river of the centuries there are powerful eddies which sweep whatever is caught in them round and round in a wild whirl. The onlooker from the banks sees motion, but not progress.

Something like this seems to me to be the condition of the Church at the present time. It is on the road to the heights, but just now it is passing lazily through the valley, self-complacent, self-satisfied, and rather shrinks from the rough mountain climbing that leads up to the light. It is in the river of God's providence, but somehow by carelessness, by unfaithful pilotage, by a lack of watchfulness, it has got out of the main channel, where the water is deep, and been caught in the eddies; and there it is, day after day, drifting about in sight of the same shores, hugging the same banks of worldliness and selfish pleasure.

These, then, are some of the things that make so indispensable and imperative this "power from on high." Oh, brethren, we must have it, or we shall be defeated all along the line. We must have it, or moral values will continue to depreciate. We must

have it, or our Church membership will be as empty as a drum, and our preaching as profitless as the play of sky-rockets in the night. We must have it, or swallow the humiliation of belonging to a kingdom whose King is uncrowned, and of proclaiming a Gospel that has ceased to be a Gospel of Salvation. We must have it, if indifference is to be warmed into interest, and interest kindled into enthusiasm, and the masses, now alienated from the Church and out of touch with our religious communities, reached and won to Christ. We must have it, if our Protestantism is to be saved from a stiff and rigid institutionalism, and the eyes of our preachers and Churches opened to see that their business is to go to the people and serve them, in their deep human needs, as long ago the Master did in Galilee. We must have it, if we are to have converts, and revivals, and mighty in-gatherings, and contrite souls crying out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

We are told that about a century ago there was a great drought in England. It continued for a year. The rains were withheld. The hillsides were scorched, the pastures burned up, the flocks and herds left to die without water. The River Thames dwindled

to a mere rivulet. Great ships were stranded upon the mud. Hundreds of boats were high and dry upon the beach. Commerce was paralysed. But just when the people were in despair the sky was overcast. The clouds deepened. Night came. The people retired, to be wakened by the pattering of the rain upon the roof. No music so sweet had ever been heard before. Soon the rain became a torrent, and the torrent became a flood. The wells were filled, the brooks overflowed, the stranded ships were lifted from their ignoble anchorage, and everywhere there was rejoicing.

Members of the Assembly, do we not all feel the need of a refreshing from on high? We need it for ourselves. We need it for our Churches. We need it for our beloved denomination. And is not this the place and this the hour to seek for it in earnest, united, importunate prayer? It will not come in the night when we are asleep. It will not come unless we look into the sky with a longing that will take no denial. Let us go up to the heights in the spirit of Elijah. Let us go again, and we shall see a little cloud. Let us go still again. Let us go seven times, and there will be the sound of abundance of rain.

THE IMPERILLED HOME

THE IMPERILLED HOME

“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.”—2 SAM. xxiii. 15.

“Let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents : for that is good and acceptable before God.”—1 TIM. v. 4.

THERE are times in life, peculiar experiences, when memory insists upon going back to the scenes and associations of early years—back to the old faiths, the old habits, the old friends of the vanished past. A home-feeling takes possession of us and, like David when hard pressed by his foes, we long for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate. This feeling comes to us sometimes in the intervals of business care, sometimes in quiet hours of meditation ; and we wander back again to the old homestead. We cross the well-worn threshold. We stand once more in the room hallowed by the family altar and the voice of prayer. We look

around for the old well-thumbed book which father used to read, and for the place where mother used to kneel, and a sense of childhood creeps into our souls—a sense of innocence and dependence comes over us—and in thought we kneel there again, just where long ago we knelt, and say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” We drink once more of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate.

Call it sentiment if you like ; no matter. Nothing else is more full of tonic and moral ozone. How often in the stress and strain of life, when sorely tempted to do wrong, has the memory of the old home, of its sacred hours, of its prayers, of its loving solicitude, been like a cable of steel to hold us from going upon the rocks ! The passing years have filled great drifts between that home and us, but defying the flight of time there is a wireless telegraphy which still brings us messages from hearthstones that are gone and from voices that are hushed. It is no indication of strength or of robustness of mind to be untouched and unmoved by the sentiment of home. Never was David more manly, or more truly human, than when he longed for a drink from the old well of his boyhood.

Never did the soldiers of the Federal and Confederate armies show themselves to be more noble and heroic than in the following incident. It was in 1863 and they were confronting each other along the opposite banks of the Rappahanock. In the twilight one evening two bands began to play at the same hour upon either bank of the river. The band on the Northern bank would play "Star Spangled Banner," "Hail Columbia," and at its conclusion the boys in blue would cheer most lustily. Then the band on the Southern bank would respond with "Dixie," "Bonnie Blue Flag," or some Southern melody, and the boys in gray would attest their approbation with a tremendous shout. But presently one of the bands struck up in sweet, plaintive notes, which were wafted across the Rappahanock and caught up at once by the other band and swelled into a grand anthem which touched every heart, "Home, Home, Sweet Home." Thousands upon thousands of voices caught it up and sang it until the hills echoed and re-echoed the grand acclaim. A responsive chord had been struck. The hearts of heroic foemen beat in unison. In that hour they were one in the sweet memory of home and—

"Something down the soldiers' cheeks,
Washed off the stains of powder."

When they yielded to that sentiment and broke into tears, they showed the splendid stuff they were made of and bore eloquent testimony to the humanising and ennobling influence of this best of all institutions.

Perhaps you have read of the effect produced by Jenny Lind's singing of "Home, Sweet Home," in Washington in 1850. The author of the famous hymn, John Howard Payne, himself was there. President Fillmore, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, General Scott, and other notables were there. First she sang "Casta Diva"—a classic selection—which was received with immense applause. Responding to repeated encores, she finally seated herself at the piano and began to sing "Home, Sweet Home." She forgot her audience, forgot her surroundings, and was back again in her native Sweden, back amid the old associations of her childhood. The tenderness, the pathos, the infinite yearning, that spoke in her song were overwhelming. The first verse lifted the audience off their feet; but when she finished, they could not clap, they could not applaud, all they could do was to sob and weep. Was it weakness? Was it an unbecoming surrender to sentimentality? I do not think so. Rather I think it was a magnificent tribute to the

power and the glory and the beauty of Home. It will be a sad day for human society—God grant that it may never come—when the hearts of the people no longer respond to this sentiment.

Was it weakness in President Garfield when at his inauguration, in the presence of all the people, he put such honour upon his aged mother, and thus recognised and exalted the home as the hope and mainstay of the Republic? Was it weakness in President McKinley, when on hearing of his mother's serious illness, with tears running down his cheeks, he wrote the following telegram: "Tell mother I will be there"? Nay, it was strength, it was manliness, it was true nobility. So long as we have Presidents who are loyal to the home and to home ties and home memories, the White House will be a place to which we can point with pride, and its influence upon the life of the people will be wholesome. That our Presidents have been men pure and strong and devoted to their home duties and relations is worth more to us as a nation than can well be put into words.

The three Divine institutions of society are the home, the Church, and the State. The home was first, and the home will be last; for

both Church and State will sink out of sight in the perfect home-life of heaven. To speak of the fundamental importance of the home, of its supreme necessity to society, would be superfluous. Let the home go down and many other institutions must go down also; for the home is the chief corner-stone upon which the whole social fabric rests. Look around among the people of the earth, and you find society high or low, civilised or savage, pure or impure, just in proportion to the place which the home occupies in popular estimation. The difference between the cannibal tribes of interior Africa and God-fearing American citizens comes more than anything else from the difference of their home life, or from their estimate of the family relation. Because France went down in her home life, she fell an easy prey to the German, who is a stalwart lover and champion of domestic virtue. If France wants to win back her former glory, let her re-establish the home, and give honour to wifehood and legitimacy to her children. But we, too, as a people are in need of words of warning. That the American home is beleaguered and imperilled is only too evident to those who take the trouble to look and consider. Let me specify a few of the attacking forces,

I. The first I mention is godless marriage. In the Roman Catholic Church marriage is one of the sacraments. We Protestants do not go as far as that, but in theory, at least, we hold that wedlock is of Divine origin, and in the books we call it "holy." How one man and one woman should live together, how they should cleave to each other and supplement each other in the family relation until severed by the inexorable hand of death, is all made clear enough in the Bible. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

But this precisely is what man dares to do. Our blundering legislators presume to take the matter into their own hands, and do not hesitate to usurp the prerogative of the Almighty. Instead of accepting the Biblical doctrine of marriage, with all its holy sanctions, they proceed to eliminate God altogether, and formulate doctrines and lay down laws of their own. Thus they divest it of its Divine authority and make it a State as distinguished from a Divine institution. The inevitable logic of this legislative interference is that what Colorado hath

joined together, or New York hath joined together, or any other state hath joined together, the State can put asunder. It is certainly obvious that what God joins together man has no authority to separate. It is equally obvious that a State marriage can be annulled by the State. How much of this is done is almost appalling.

This severance of God from marriage is one of the greatest perils that threaten the home to-day. It strikes at the very foundations of family life. Let us think clearly and boldly. The foundation of the State is the family; the foundation of the family is the marriage bond; the strength of the marriage bond is the bridal vow, and the sanctity of this vow is that it is made in the name of God. Now let the State intermeddle, let it strike out the God element, and it is in so far guilty of suicide. What security is there for the home if its existence hangs upon the vote of legislators or the ruling of courts? And what security is there for the State if, by its own sanction, the homes of its people are afloat on the emotions and passions, on the animosities and temporary alienations of men and women? What is needed everywhere in this country is to emphasise and enforce the Divine nature of marriage, to re-introduce

God into this relation, and make it holy wedlock indeed; and in this effort the State, for its own security, should reinforce the Church.

II. As the logical outcome of godless marriage we have the second great peril, viz., *Divorce*. It is made so easy and so simple by accommodating legislators that numberless marriages are entered into at a venture, without deliberation, without solemnity, with the feeling that they can readily be nullified if not found agreeable. In thousands of instances there is little or no thought of the binding and indissoluble nature of the marriage bond. The mutual commitment of the wedding service is not necessarily regarded as a commitment for life. The courts can grant release, and that, too, for very trifling and frivolous reasons—incompatibility of temper, non-support, desertion, cruelty, and numerous other flimsy pretexts, until the whole thing is often little better than a burlesque. Think what must be the effect upon marriage and the home when the contracting parties can see right beyond the bridal altar an open door of separation, through which they may pass to make another matrimonial venture, and still another.

Every day our courts are grinding out their grists of separation, rupturing bonds made in the name of the eternal Father, splitting homes in sunder, and undermining the domestic altars of the nation. Nearly all our states are exceedingly accommodating in this matter, but South Dakota enjoys the unenviable distinction of granting a divorce for the mere asking of it, the sole condition being a brief sojourn within her borders. How all this beleaguers the home needs no words of mine to explain, and Christian people everywhere should lift up their voices against it.

III. And what shall I say of the club in relation to the home? Only what will bear the light, I trust. Every one familiar with history knows that the club is a very old institution. Clubs literary, clubs musical, clubs political, clubs convivial, clubs theological. I have belonged to a number of clubs myself which I found decidedly beneficial, so that I do not propose to make any indiscriminate criticism. But you know it is an American characteristic to over-do things. We have lived so much in the presence of big mountains, big rivers, big territory, big railways, and colossal enterprises of all sorts that we have unconsciously acquired a dis

position to be extravagant in thought and speech and life. This extravagance enters into the very wit and humour of our people. For example, a Western Yankee, reared under the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, was travelling in Switzerland. Asked by a native of that country if he had not noticed the magnificence of the Alps, he replied, "Waal, now I come to think of it, I reckon I did pass some risin' ground."

This chronic habit of exaggeration shows itself in every direction, and nowhere is it more pronounced than in the matter of clubs and club life. If we could do things in moderation there would be little to fear or to condemn in this connection; but it is out of our rash and thoughtless intemperance that the danger comes. No one can reasonably find fault with a man for attending the club occasionally, so long as he keeps within bounds, but when he allows his club to draw him away from his own fireside, to usurp the place of the domestic hearthstone, to monopolise attention and affections which ought to be given to his wife and children, when, in one word, he becomes married to his club and divorced from his home, he is guilty of an attack upon the holiest institution under the sun.

And when this extravagance is seen on the other side of the house the peril to the home is still greater. That is to say, when a woman, the mother of a family, becomes so infatuated with the club that she loses interest in her children, neglects them, leaves them to run the streets, and form what associations they choose, the danger is tenfold increased. Neglect of children is one of the most ominous, most startling symptoms of our times. The arrest of a number of boys here on Capitol Hill a few days ago is still fresh in our minds, and serves to give point to what I am now saying. How much of this neglect is due to whist clubs, and reading clubs, and clubs of one sort and another, I shall not undertake to say. But I do affirm that in far too many instances the home is being clubbed to death. To such lengths are we going in this matter of the club that a facetious newspaper writer declares that the time is not far distant when John Howard Payne's famous lyric will be revised to read—

“Club, club, sweet, sweet club,
Be it ever so humble
There's no place like the club.”

A lady said to me the other day, “But we women must have opportunities for self-

improvement." Certainly, and there is nothing on earth half so improving, nothing half so well calculated to give culture and breadth and refinement as loyalty to the home, and to home duties and responsibilities. Other things being equal, the mother who devotes herself to her children and looks well to her own household, will be richer in heart and richer in thought and richer in all that is womanly, than the mother who puts the chief emphasis upon the club. I am talking now about mothers and not about women who have no children and no domestic cares. When husband or wife likes any place on earth better than home, the danger-line has been reached and crossed, and because I see danger, because I see imperilled homes, I have been constrained to say these words.

IV. Alongside of this club peril, and in some places as a part of it, is the increasing prominence of the winecup. Preachers, reformers, philanthropists, and high-minded public men, in touch with social life and acquainted with its drift, are beginning to sound the alarm. There is all too much evidence that social drinking is on the increase. It seems to be one of the inevitable concomitants of an over-fed, over-dressed, luxurious age. In our Eastern papers articles are becoming quite frequent

on the "Drinking Habits of Women." Speaking of this matter, Mrs. John A. Logan said recently: "I do not like to admit that any woman ever indulged in such lamentable habits, but must succumb to the indubitable evidence that is before us continually, and can only bow my head for very shame for my sex, and pray, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" In connection with this, let me quote you the words of a distinguished Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Referring to the alarming growth of drunkenness among women, he said not long since: "A short while ago I addressed a meeting of leading society women in New York City, where I made the statement—viz., that there is an appalling growth of drunkenness among women. It was proved that my statement was literally correct as far as New York was concerned. I am sorry to say that it appertains to women and to mothers, particularly to those who have the care and instruction of our future men and women."

Much to the same effect is the statement of the *Pittsburg Dispatch* that because of this strained and immoderate social life stimulants are becoming an indispensable part of the day's programme for many women. They

are constantly tempted to brace up tired nerves with a nip of Cognac, or a glass of Benedictine, or a drop of Green Chartreuse. To such an extent has the custom grown that fashionable merchants keep a bottle and a dainty glass in a sequestered spot for the accommodation of society patrons. Indeed, it is asserted by those who are in a position to know that in all of our cities the abstinence of a generation ago is going out and intemperance coming in and particularly among women. The other day a young woman, elegantly gowned and wearing jewellery worth \$3,000.00, was brought into the police-court of New York City—drunk. She belongs to a wealthy and respectable home. In court she testified that she had been in a restaurant and had imbibed a little too freely. And in the same magazine from which I get these facts I read of a popular woman's club in an Eastern city which furnished liquor so abundantly that many of its members had to be sent home in carriages. The thing became so notorious that the club in question found it necessary to exclude liquors except for use at meals.

Now my responsibility for these statements is simply that of quotation. Whether this condition of things applies to Denver I shall

not venture to say. It certainly does not to our Woman's Club. But all this indicates a drift, and this drift is against the home, and therefore full of peril. We know what drink is doing down on the lower levels of life to destroy this Divine institution; and now it seems that the alcoholic demon is getting in his work at the opposite side. He is attacking the home both from the bottom and the top, grinding it between the upper and nether millstones.

In view of all this, then, it seems to me that my message this morning is timely. The eloquent Grady of Georgia said, "The home is the strength of the American Republic," and to that doctrine we must all subscribe. We must preserve the home in all its purity, in all its beauty, in all its Divine innocence and simplicity or go upon the rocks. The war-cry of the old Roman was "*pro aris et focis*"—"for our altars and our hearths, our religion and our home." It called out all his courage, all his love, all his determination. Woe to the enemy that approached when this was the issue. These two, the altar and the home, are linked together. No man can be truly religious who does not love his home; and I doubt whether any man can be truly domestic who does not worship God. To

defend the home, to protect it against all foes, whether they approach through channels of atheism, or channels of impurity, or through legislative halls, or through the printed page, or through the appetite for drink, or through false doctrines of society, should call out all that is best and most heroic in us. Home, Home, Sweet Home—oh, the magic of that word ! In it are the sunshine of boyhood and girlhood, and the thrill and joy of all the most blessed memories of our later years. In it, when hallowed by love, and made bright by kindness and unselfish service and happy by the play of filial and parental affection, is a prophecy, a foretaste of heaven.

LIFE FOR LIFE

LIFE FOR LIFE

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”—LEV. xvii. 11.

“In whom we have redemption through His blood.”—EPH. i. 7.

“And they sung a new song, saying: Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.”—REV. v. 9.

THERE is no mistaking the central thought of these words. It stands out clear as a mountain against the sunset. Moses and Paul and John strike precisely the same note, whether they speak from the point of view of humanity redeemed or of humanity in need of redemption. It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Such was the lesson to the tribes in the wilderness, such the lesson to the Ephesian Church, and such the theme of the new song in heaven. Evidently, then, we have something here worth thinking about.

It has to do with the very core and substance of the Gospel. Some of us remember how contemptuously Theodore Parker, the distinguished Unitarian, spoke of the blood as preached by a large part of the Evangelical Church. He characterised it as the religion of the shambles. It was coarse and crude and repulsive to him. No doubt the crass realism of it has been exploited sometimes beyond what was wise. By vivid illustration and graphic description the attention has been fixed upon the symbol rather than upon the thing symbolised. But men who think ought to be able to penetrate beneath the surface, to get away from the shadow to the substance. Certainly the abuse of a thing ought never to lead a well-balanced judgment to reject and condemn it.

Some of our most significant and delightful hymns, which all intelligent Christians love to sing, are ruled out by the critics who insist upon being over-literal. Take Cowper's celebrated hymn, for example :—

“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins:
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains,”

and it is said to be an offence against good taste, a song suggestive of the slaughter-

house, or of some place of carnage. But to those who are not fettered by any slavish literalism, and who see the profound and blessed truth that lies behind, this hymn and every other like it is inspiring and beautiful.

Think for a moment, as another suggests, of the unimpeachable honesty of that word *blood*. It is susceptible of no glosses, or disguises, or aliases. All the world over it has but one meaning. You can take the word *love* and you can dilute it away into *affection*, and away a little farther into *regard*, and still farther away into *esteem*, until it becomes a sort of moonlight quality with all the original warmth and glow gone out of it. Esteem puts no tender hand under the aching head. Esteem helps no poor man up the hill. Esteem binds up no broken heart, and kindles no fire on the hearth that has gone out. It is too cold. So you can shade the word *truth* away through various synonyms such as *candour*, *frankness*, *veracity*, and the like until it begins to mix with falsehood as day merges into night. But take the word *Blood*, and see what you can make of it. As a matter of fact you cannot soften or disguise it or clothe it in some other dress, or find for it some more genteel equivalent. No matter how dainty you may be in the use

of language if you want to speak of blood at all you have got to say blood, for the dictionary will not accommodate you with any synonyms. The word *blood* stands alone, and, as another has said, "is too simple, too energetic, too solemn to take upon it the faintest gloss of the most reluctant expositor. Its unquenchable ardour burns through the snow which you scatter upon its summit. No winter can loiter upon those ardent slopes." The word melts through and stands out in all its own naked and rugged strength. It is immensely significant. God has ordained that that upon which the salvation of mankind depends shall not be trifled with or disguised or softened away into something else.

But now let us be very clear about the statement that it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul, and that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. The text itself gives us the interpretation, for it declares plainly that the life of the flesh is in the blood. It seems a little remarkable, does it not, that this statement of a modern scientific fact should have been made to the desert tribes of Israel nearly four thousand years ago. It is not so very long since the discovery was made by

anatomists that the vitality of the entire bodily structure is in the blood. But that which is a truism of physical science to-day was a fact of revelation far back in the dim dawn of the world's history. How did Moses come to know that the blood is the life? Think it out, and while you are doing that let me say that according to our text, and according to the teachings of the Bible everywhere, the doctrine of salvation by blood is simply the doctrine of life for life. Remember the life is in the blood, and hence when we say that we are saved by the blood of Christ we mean simply that He gave His life for our life. Any man who stumbles over that must stumble with his eyes open. I do not mean to say that there are no depths in it which we cannot fathom; for there are, but the practical working of the great doctrine of life for life is too plain and too universal to be mistaken.

Look around you in the world and it is life for life everywhere. The very coal that warms our houses and drives our engines comes from life that has died. Every stalk of corn, every blooming flower, every waving tree, proclaims the great principle. They grow and flourish because something sacrificed life for them. If there are to be living beings anywhere on this

earth of ours, other lives must be surrendered for them. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone"; there is no increase, no multiplication; "but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." That is the law. Life comes through death. Plants live upon plants, insects upon insects, animals upon animals, and men not only upon men, but upon all the lower orders of life besides. Whether we are vegetarians or meat-eaters, whether we dress *à la mode* or in rural simplicity, if we are to be clothed, and shod, and fed at all, it must be at the expense of innocent lives that have suffered. If to-day when we go home and sit down about our well-laden tables, smoking with toothsome viands, we were to think back to the sources of supply I am very sure we should come to blood. So if we were to trace our comfortable coats and our elegant hats and all our wearing apparel to their origin we should certainly find ourselves in the presence of blood. Think of the animals that are killed. Think of the lives that are slain, of the fingers that ache, of the backs that are made weary, of the feet that are blistered, to provide food and raiment for us.

This law of substitution, of life for life, of pang for pang, of blood for blood, is wrought

into the very constitution of things. As well quarrel with the law of gravitation or any other great law of nature. It surprises me sometimes to hear men of intelligence making light of the doctrine of substitution, rejecting in religion what they are compelled to accept in all the material and domestic and social world around them. How strange in them to regard the great principle of substitution in Christianity as something abnormal, something eccentric and solitary, when they cannot pass among their fellow-men from sunrise to sunset without seeing the very same principle in operation everywhere! The fields and hills are full of it; and what is more to the point, society and business are full of it.

I know business men, not a thousand miles from here, and so do you, who are literally wearing themselves out. From early morning till late at night they are straining and striving, figuring and calculating, exhausting their nerve-force and their vitality, until they are pale and pinched and ready to break down. They are old at fifty, distressed by insomnia, made wretched and miserable by dyspepsia, almost on the point of tumbling into the grave, poor, overworked souls with all the fire and vigour of their younger years

consumed away. How is it to be accounted for? Is it because they enjoy it? No; it is difficult to see where the enjoyment comes into a treadmill life of that kind. Is it because they are grasping and greedy of gain and sacrificing themselves on the altar of Mammon? No; in thousands of cases that will not explain their suffering and self-immolation. Is it because they are extravagant and are foolishly striving to maintain a certain style of living? No; that will not account for it. They are plain and simple in their personal habits, and have no ambition to cut a figure in society.

Why, then, do they do it? Why do they toil and suffer and deny themselves at such a rate? The answer is not far to seek. There are wives to be cared for, homes to be kept up, children to be supported and educated and started in the world. That office, that counting-room, that store, that shop, is linked to a home where the dear ones are. For them these faithful bread-winners work and overwork until sometimes their brains throb in warning that the end is not far away. More men fall in that battle every year than fell in winning the independence of Cuba. What is all this but the principle of substitution, fathers suffering

that their households may not suffer, becoming weak and weary that loved ones at home may become strong? If that is not life for life, what is it?

And on the mother-side of the house the great truth has even more frequent illustration. You can see pathetic and beautiful incarnations of it beneath a thousand roofs. Mothers sewing and stitching and wasting themselves away for their children, every day growing paler and weaker, bearing heavy crosses on delicate shoulders, toiling up inevitable Calvaries for the sake of little ones who cannot help themselves. Our cities are full of them. Frail women in the hard, stern struggle of life, fighting their very lives away in the battle for bread, carrying burdens which no man could carry, their whole existence a ceaseless martyrdom, for the dear little innocent ones who cry for mother. In all the world there is nothing nobler, nothing more heroic. Some day they sicken, their weary heads drop, their thin hands fall by their sides, the doctor is summoned, but it is too late. They slip away into untimely graves. The physician may call it nervous prostration, or consumption, or fever, or anything else he likes; but I call it substitution, life for life. The mother for the child.

With what absorbing interest I have followed the story of David Livingstone and his matchless heroisms! Repetition instead of making such a story stale and flat only heightens the interest of it. Fiction is tame and romance is dull compared with the rehearsal of the unadorned facts of Livingstone's career. Think of a great, strong, capable, highly educated man leaving his native land, leaving all the comforts and advantages of civilisation, pushing through swamp and jungle and forest; braving perils of wild beasts and of wilder men, gladly accepting the crushing and unspeakable solitude and isolation of interior Africa, in order that he might suffer and die for the poor degraded black man. Racked by disease, tortured by fever, pierced by pain, crippled with ulcers on his feet until every step was an agony, he nevertheless held on, inspired by the mighty love of his mighty heart. At last Stanley came. Deliverance was at hand. Surely he had earned the right to go home. But no, Africa, poor bleeding, neglected Africa, was on his soul, and in Africa he stayed, dying in a little grass hut on his knees, his last act, his last word a prayer for Africa, and that prayer stands chiselled upon his tombstone in Westminster Abbey

to-day. His whole history gathers itself up into one great word—Substitution. Life for life. As long as the waves of the ocean beat out their solemn music on the shores of that land, they will never cease to chant the name of Livingstone and say, “He died for Africa.”

Everything else pales before the grandeur and sublimity of vicarious sacrifice, the spirit that leads one person to suffer for another. Whatever is loftiest in poetry, whatever is most overpowering in eloquence, whatever is most imperishable in romance, whatever is most touching and immortal in art, comes from this principle. We praise our soldiers in time of war, we strew flowers in their path, we break down with emotion when they march away to the front, because they are going to suffer for others, to shed their blood for their fellow-men.

When Memorial Day comes, many an eloquent word will be spoken about the men who more than a generation ago marched to the front and went down into the battle's hell to keep our flag in the air. But at the very heart of what they did was this great thought of substitution, They endured hardship and death for us.

Take this principle out of the home and you convert it into a mere boarding-house.

Take it out of society and you make it an endless scramble for selfish conquest.

Take this principle of substitution, of life for life, out of literature, take it out of history, let our libraries be made up of matters commercial and matters political only; of buying and selling and getting office and the details of Legislatures and Congresses, and they would be as dry as the Humboldt desert yonder beyond the Rocky Mountains. On every path leading to such libraries the grass would grow, and over their doors the spider would weave his web undisturbed.

And this principle, dear friends, is fundamental in the religion of the Cross. It runs all through the Bible as the mother-lode runs through the range. Type and shadow and symbol and altar and sacrifice all find their explanation in the sublime, the heavenly thought of substitution, life for life. They all point forward to Calvary as every gray streak of dawn along the morning sky points forward to the splendours of noonday. All the hints of vicarious suffering in nature, and all the suggestions and exhibitions of substitution among men, in store, and shop, and home, and missionary land, and battle-field, Christ gathers up and focalises and gives them their supreme manifestation once for all

in the place of skulls. When did ever mother suffer, or father suffer, or missionary suffer, or soldier suffer, as Jesus suffered, who concentrated and carried in His holy heart all the woes, all the sorrows, all the sins of the world?

A very eloquent and distinguished man tells us that one time he was exploring the slums of a great city. He saw the poor down there in their wretched tenements without light, without ventilation, in the grip of misery and squalor and filth and disease. The rags, the vileness, the moral abomination were awful. It seemed as though some dark under-world had spewed up its loathsome contents to poison and curse the earth. It made him sick at heart, and he said, "How does the heart of God stand it? Why doesn't the heart of God break?" He walked on and the sights grew worse and worse. He saw little children gathering up scraps of decayed fruit from the gutters and eagerly eating them. He saw Want staring at him out of its great, gaunt, hungry eyes, and again he said, "Why doesn't the heart of God break?" Then, while he thought and brooded over it until his whole soul was burdened and crushed and exhausted, he seemed to see a vision and to hear a voice. He saw Jesus, poor and hungry and homeless. He saw Him with

tears in His eyes, and hounds of persecution on His track, going up to Jerusalem. He saw Him with thorns on His brow, with nails through His hands and His feet, stretched upon the cross, and just before His head fell forward on His breast, this was the voice He seemed to hear, "God's heart *has* broken. It broke yonder on Calvary."

Men and women, the vision and the voice were true. Not only for the poor and the wretched and the miserable; not only for the prodigal and the castaway; not only for the man who slimes his way with the worm and stands with both feet in hell, but for you, for me, God's heart has broken. That is what we mean by the blood, and I pity the person who can speak of such a sacrifice, such an exhibition of love as the religion of the shambles. If that sacrifice, that substitution of life for life, does not touch us and attract us, and make us ashamed of our selfishness and our sins; if it does not stir our gratitude and stimulate our generosity, and cause the springs of our benevolence to flow, we must be stony and impervious indeed—dead to everything noble, everything sublime. But I am persuaded better things of you. To-day in God's name and for the extension of His kingdom and glory, I lay before you the appeal of Blood, of life for life.

ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

“And the disciples were called Christians *first* in Antioch.”—Acts xi. 26.

IT is interesting to note how many of the great movements of history got their names. Given in derision and scorn by the wits of the time, they were promptly adopted, and grew to be names of glory. Puritan, Methodist, Wesleyan, Quaker, Protestant, may be mentioned as examples. Among these must be classed the name Christian. It was spoken in contempt by the witty inhabitants of Antioch; it fell from their lips with an accent of disdain, and was flung at the followers of Jesus as an epithet of disgrace; but to-day it outranks every other name. For dignity, for honour, for noble significance, no other designation can compare with it for a moment. In its content no other word attached to men or to the movements of men holds so much.

So great has it grown to be, so full of Divine meaning, that the world expects more from the Christian than from any other man. Nay, it expects more from the humblest follower of Jesus than from the most polished and scholarly scoffer or atheist. The very men in the community who despise your faith demand from you the very highest moral conduct because of that faith. They will laugh at your creed, and ridicule your theology, and run the knife of irreverent criticism through your Bible, while at the same time they look for a higher type of life in you than in any other class of persons whatsoever. This is enough to show the supreme place the name Christian occupies in the thought of the world. I congratulate those of you this morning who have a right to bear this glorious name, and are not ashamed of it; and I devoutly hope that those who do not bear it now may make haste to assume it as the proudest of all privileges, and as the badge of the highest earthly honour.

In my sermon to-day I propose to go back to first principles, and deal with some very elementary truths, even at the risk of leading you over the beaten track. In doing so I am sure you will bear

with me for the sake of what I have in mind.

I. What is it to be a Christian? Let me address myself to that question for a moment. To make it just as clear as possible, I shall answer first by two or three *negatives*.

(1) To be a Christian is not to accept a certain creed, or to subscribe to certain theological beliefs. You will not misunderstand me. I believe in doctrine. I venerate the work of the immortal thinkers and students of the deep things of God who formulated our confessions of faith. Only the shallow and thoughtless can laugh at what they have done. But at the same time all the creeds and theologies of Christendom, subscribed to and mastered, can never make a man a Christian. A man may be as orthodox as the devil himself and quite as unworthy to be called a disciple of Jesus.

A hungry person is no more saved from starvation by accepting the scientific man's teachings about the chemistry of bread, and the working of the yeast in the unbaked loaf, than a man becomes a Christian by subscribing to a certain creed. No traveller gets across a bridge by accepting the architect's statements as to its strength and soundness and reliability; and yet the architect's creed

is not to be despised. The point to be seized upon is that it is not relation to a system that makes a man a Christian, but relation to the Saviour.

(2) To be a Christian is not simply to believe in God and to do what you think is right. That ideal is not even up to the level of the Mohammedan, or the Buddhist, or the Jew. Every devout follower of the prophet of Mecca, every pious Hindu, every orthodox Hebrew, would say at once that true religion "consists not in doing what you think is right, but in doing what God thinks is right."

(3) To be a Christian is not simply to be what we call a *good* man. If it were, we would never have had that interview of Jesus with Nicodemus by night. There are men who are honest and kind, truthful and loving, who take no account of Christ whatever, give Him no place in their lives, never pray to Him, or worship Him, or manifest toward Him the slightest affection. They reject His authority, they deny His claims, they will have nothing to do with His salvation. Can such men be called Christians? Yes, when we can have "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out, or sunshine without the sun, or life without the vital principle. This is not to deny the reality of the moral virtues of these

men ; it is simply to deny that they have any right to the name Christian.

(4) To be a Christian is not necessarily to experience the short, sharp, decisive upheaval of soul called conversion as the preliminary step. Some have this, some have not. Paul had, but there is no evidence that John, or James, or Matthew ever passed through such an experience. Some of the most devoted and genuine Christians I have ever known are unable to point to any special day or hour when the change came. They only know that they love the Saviour, and no earthly prize could tempt them to give Him up.

(5) Now these negatives, I think, clearly indicate the positive. To be a Christian is first and last and midst a personal relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Love for Him, devotion to Him, enthronement of Him in the affections, in the will, in the whole life—that is what it means. It is the union of my soul, your soul, with Christ as the branch is in the vine and the vine in the branch. All other questions are subsidiary and unessential ; this personal relationship is vital and fundamental. The poet goes to the very core of it when he sings—

“If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say

That of all mankind I will cleave to Him
And cleave to Him alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God,
And the only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."

That is what it is to be a Christian, to be loyally, devotedly, unalterably attached to Christ. Begin there and everything else will take care of itself. Doctrines and creeds will fall into their proper places, morality will be shot through and through with life, and conversion will be a matter of daily occurrence, a daily pledge of fealty to Jesus.

II. But now let me show you very simply and plainly *how to become a Christian*. The question is not one that relates to perfect sainthood, or to a life in Christ Jesus fully completed and rounded out. I am not talking about the finished product, or about the splendidly matured and ripened result, but simply about starting. It is not the perfect scholar I have in my mind, but the disciple at his first lessons. Once in the Hawaiian Islands I saw the raw sugar cane go in at one end of the mill, pass through process after process, until finally it came out at the other end the perfected sugar of commerce. What I am concerning myself about

here, if you will pardon the figure, is the first step in the great mill of Christ—the point where the raw material enters. Are you willing to begin to be a Christian? Willing by an act of will, by the crystallisation of all your hopes and all your desires into one supreme resolution, to begin your life over again by deliberately entering the school of Christ?

I say nothing now about *feeling*. Primarily this question of becoming a Christian has nothing whatever to do with the emotions. You do not go to your business day after day, or engage in this enterprise or that, or walk the road of commercial or professional activity, under the inspiration of feeling. Indeed, if you consulted your feelings you would often stay at home. But you gird yourself by a higher power, you come under the magisterial direction of the will. You choose, and, choosing, this and that duty is done. So in pointing out the *how* of becoming a Christian I put the emphasis where Jesus did—upon the *will*. “Whosoever *will*.” “Be it unto thee even as thou *wilt*.” “Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye might have life.” Every great act in human history and in the history of the individual is done by the exercise of *will*. Reason may argue,

judgment may sift and weigh, desire may incline the life in a certain direction, and imagination may intensify the longings by painting beautiful pictures; but the enginery of manhood and womanhood never moves to definite action until the *will* turns on the steam.

We must distinguish between willing and wishing, between doing and desiring. I have seen cards used in evangelistic meetings which read: "I desire to lead henceforth a Christian life." But that is far too weak to accomplish anything. I doubt whether there is a person here to-day who does not *desire* to be a Christian. The wish, I believe, is in every heart. Your very presence here is evidence of that. But wishing to be warm will not build a fire. Wishing to be rich will not bring you wealth. Wishing to go to Europe will not take you there. I suppose there is not a ragged tramp in the country, or a lazy lounge about the street corner, who does not desire to be the possessor of a fortune; but he desires to be lazy a good deal more—therefore he stays where he is. I suppose a great many of us would like to be scholars, but the road is hard; we desire ease and leisure more than application, and so remain a long way this side

of the promised land. Men are full of desires and day-dreams and like-to-be's, but only those who choose, achieve; only those who will, win. I should not be surprised if the wretched denizens of Market Street down here, and the wretched lives that drift about through our cities everywhere, have longings to be better, impulses to get back again to the good. I am sure the drunkard and the debauchee have luminous moments when they crave for something higher than revelry and sin; but, alas! they do not choose, and so stay in the gutter and in the mire.

You see, then, where I lay the stress—and I do it in strict accordance with the teachings of God's work—viz., upon the *will*. But I hear some one ask: "Can I change my conduct, can I reconstruct my character, can I lift myself out of the old grooves, cut loose from all things that are wrong, and become a thorough and complete Christian all in a moment? Can choosing work such a radical transformation as this instantaneously?" No, it cannot. I teach nothing of the kind; there is nothing of the kind in the Bible. It is a long, long road from Peter the fisherman to Peter the martyr. A long, long road from the child in the kindergarten to the senior in the university.

But the Peter who first heard Christ's "follow Me" and obeyed was just as truly in the school of Jesus as Peter the ripe and venerable apostle; the little tot in the kindergarten is just as much in the realm of education as the university graduate on Commencement Day.

I am not telling you how to be a perfect Christian all in a moment; but how to begin to be an imperfect Christian right here and now. A man cannot make a complete journey in an instant, but he can begin instantly. He cannot wash himself in the twinkling of an eye, but he can begin to wash. He cannot build a perfect house by a solitary act of will; but he can begin to build. There was that young man in the far country among the swine. He did not get back to the old home at one step, but there was a first step, and that first step determined all the rest. To become a Christian is simply to start on a journey, to begin to wash, to enter a school, to lay the first stone of your life-house upon the Rock, and then, having begun, to follow on, to persevere to press toward the mark, higher and higher, until perfection is reached in another world.

Now I know there are people whose ideal of the Christian life is very high—so high

that often it is made an excuse for refusing to enter the school of Christ at all. The ideal certainly cannot be too high; but better have no ideal whatever than make it so exalted as to paralyse all effort, looking away to glorious mountain heights which we have no heart to climb. "But," you say, "what right have I to call myself a Christian if I do not measure up to the New Testament standard? What right have I to enroll myself as a loyal soldier if I do not fully obey the great Captain's commands?" It is enough to reply that no child is turned out of school for one bad lesson, or two, or a dozen, if the teacher knows that, on the whole, the child is trying to be a good pupil, and is daily striving to overcome his dulness and to grow in knowledge. No boy or girl is ever expelled from the home because they fail to come up to the ideal of filial obedience and affection. They slip, they fall, they make a thousand mistakes, they are full of faults and failures and shortcomings; often they cause father and mother a great deal of pain and anxiety, sometimes sorrow and heartache; but the parents know that at the bottom the children still love them; know that they mean to be loyal, that they mean to do better and to struggle up, and

so they bear with them, and never for a moment entertain the thought that the children should be driven forth. Well, dear friends, God is infinitely more tender, more patient, more loving towards us than we are toward our children, or than any teacher is toward his scholars. If when you begin to be a Christian you mean to obey, mean to be honest and earnest, mean to resist evil, mean to do and be the right thing; if you are pained when you go astray, wounded when you do wrong, and seek always to do better, Christ will take your will for the deed, your purpose for the performance, and the ruling choice of your life will be counted unto you for righteousness.

I do not believe you can pain the Master more than to take the position that He calls you to a life too high for you to lead, asks you to be something you never can attain unto, points you to summits of character you can never reach, mocks you by holding up an ideal you can never realise. Oh, it is not, it cannot be so. What He asks He enables men to perform. Only begin, take the first step, make the choice, make it now; here in the presence of Almighty God, with all your soul and mind and strength determine to make the wish of Christ the supreme law

of your life, and trust Him for the rest. Once within the gate, once on redemption ground, you surely can depend upon the Redeemer to carry you through.

III. Having shown you the *how*, let me now give you a reason or two as to *why* you should be a Christian.

1. First of all because it is *right*. That plants us upon solid rock. I might put it in the form of a syllogism. The highest goodness of which we can conceive is the greatest thing in the world. Every man's duty is to seek after the highest goodness. The highest goodness of which the world has any knowledge is incarnated in Christ. That argument, I believe, is sound and will not be seriously challenged. If there is anything in the universe so great, anything so noble, anything so supremely fair and beautiful as goodness, it has never yet been named; and in the Son of God this abstract quality has been made flesh. In Him it walks and talks and loves. Therefore it must be right, absolutely and unquestionably right, to have one's life rooted and nourished in Him. I appeal directly to every man's conscience. Is there a person in the house who, in his innermost soul, can deny that it is *right* to be a Christian! If therefore

you want above all else to do what is right, to love what is good and with your whole soul seek after it, and day by day translate it into your life, you will delay no longer to become a follower of Jesus.

2. Second, you should be a Christian because you need Christ's help in the stress and strain of daily experience. I know you are strong, I know you are broad-shouldered, I know how self-sufficient you often feel; but I know also that there come times when, like Peter, you realise that you cannot go upon the waves alone. You sink, the billows rise about you and you are conscious of the need of some almighty hand to bear you up. I know that in the intervals of life, when the pressure of business is off, and sometimes even in its grind and whirl your best self, your deepest self, longs for the help, the uplift, the inspiration of Him who is mighty to save. I know how hard the fight with the lower nature is. I know that when we would do good evil is present with us. I know the warfare that goes on in the secret places of the soul, know that in this battle we need a reserve—some force beyond our own—to give us the victory. I know, moreover, that there are dark days, bitter experiences, disappointments, discourage-

ments, sorrows, bereavements, rough valley roads where the shadows hang heavy, and our own strength is a prop that fails, a resource too weak and small to meet the sore emergency. Oh, then we want some voice to speak in the darkness, some tender, loving guide to take us by the hand, to lead us out of the valley to the hills where the sun is shining.

Ideals are usually far away, radiant, and distant like the stars, good to steer by and give us our course across the sea, but Christ comes to walk by our side and to aid our slipping, stumbling feet as we climb. Who else in all history can do that for you? I think sometimes if I could have lived with Paul and had him talk to me as he did to Timothy and Titus; I think if I could have had that splendid hero of the Cross for a companion, I might have grown strong and fearless and intrepid too. I think if I could have communed with the saintly Baxter, or the heavenly-minded Rutherford, or had fellowship with the sweet St. Francis of Assisi, who used to call the trees and the flowers and the animals his sisters and brothers, I might have caught their spirit and become sweet and gentle like them. But they are gone. The past has wrapped its

mists about them. They walk the earth no more, but Christ lives. Christ the hero of heroes, Christ the saintliest, heavenliest, gentlest spirit, is here to make His strength our strength, His life our life, His destiny our destiny. Now I say you need this Christ, you know you need Him here in the struggle and the battle, and this is reason enough why you should become a Christian.

3. But there is another reason. We shall not be here long. The years hasten. The curtain will soon be rung down. This drama, in which we are all actors, will shift to another stage. I do not think it is fanaticism, or foolishness, or superstition to say that nothing will so surely guarantee our future, nothing will make it so safe for us to pass from this stage to that as to become Christians. Recall the words of the aged John, the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "Like Him"—that is the destiny of the believer in Jesus, and isn't that a good reason for becoming a Christian?

"It doth not yet appear what we shall

be." Wait till the bud unfolds. Wait till the timbers upon which God is working are put together. In the city of Honolulu, away yonder in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, I saw a house every board and post of which had been framed in New England, and I was told that that was the history of many another house in those islands. In the early years of missionary enterprise there the material was prepared in New England, sawed, fitted, mortised, stowed in the holds of vessels and shipped around Cape Horn to be put up in that remote region. I can imagine a man going down into one of the ships and seeing the timbers, all framed and piled away there, mixed together in careless confusion, he says, "It doth not yet appear what they shall be." But he arrives in Honolulu, he sees those timbers taken out of the ship, built into cosy houses, tenanted by happy families, with flowers and pretty yards around, and then everything is made clear.

When we become Christians we enter God's carpenter shop. He saws us and rips us and planes us and frames us according to His own loving plan. He uses many a rough tool upon us. Here He drives in a nail, there He twists in a screw, yonder He fastens

in a bolt. In the hull of the world's ship we are carried, around Cape Horn where the two seas meet, and one of these days we shall land on the Isles of the Blessed, and there we shall be set up into a house eternal in the heavens.

My task is done. Are you willing, are you ready, to become a Christian, to let God work upon you and shape you for Himself? If so, why not settle the matter here and now and go out of this house to-day irrevocably and for ever committed to Jesus Christ?

**THE MISCHIEF OF DESTRUCTIVE
THINKING**

THE MISCHIEF OF DESTRUCTIVE THINKING

“And behold certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?”—
MATT. ix. 3, 4.

“SAID within themselves.” If all the speeches that are made in the inner chambers of the soul became audible! If they were heard in home, and shop, and church, and market-place! In that case there would be sensations, and convulsions, and upheavals in society more thrilling and tragical than the books have ever recorded. You know how we talk within ourselves and the things we say—how we characterise and judge and measure the people about us, marking them down or up, according to our moods and feelings, or the dominant disposition of our hearts. It is wonderful what is going on within ourselves, and the proceedings of that silent Star Chamber really deter-

mine what we are. We fancy sometimes that no reporter gets in there, that all this Star Chamber talk is a profound secret, but we are very much mistaken. There is One who knows our thoughts before they clothe themselves in words that fall from the lips. If we appreciated this fact I am sure it would make us more careful as to what we say within ourselves.

The theme suggested by our text is: "The Mischief of Destructive Thinking." To those who are attentive I am sure it will yield some practical lessons for this hour. Some time ago there appeared an article in the *Philadelphia Post* entitled "A Sensible Infidel." It had reference to a Kansas City man who had proclaimed himself an infidel for twenty-five years, and who died leaving a curious will. All his fortune of \$150,000, with the exception of \$4,000, was given to religious and charitable organisations. No explanation was made, but the fact itself was eloquent.

It reminded the *Philadelphia Post* editor of a very brilliant infidel who once wrote a series of articles setting forth his views. "One morning," said the infidel, "I had a caller, a stranger. He came to my house, introduced himself, and with touching fervour

thanked me again and again for making him see the light. He had found out that I had written the articles. I was greatly nonplussed, but replied as best I could that I was glad to have been of service to him. He had been a worker in his Church, and was, as I found afterwards, a man of influence and usefulness in the community. His excessive gratitude was really embarrassing, and it reached a climax when he said, with increased intensity, 'Sir, you have converted me.' Now, I have been wondering ever since what I converted him to."

When he began to think about his own views practically, and endeavoured to resolve them, he found that they were all moonshine. There was no substance, no crystallisation, nothing to get hold of. So when the Kansas City infidel with his fortune began to look around, as he stood on the brink of eternity, he found that infidelity had no organisations through which money could be used for the alleviation of suffering, no institutions for the uplifting of the fallen and unfortunate, no asylums, no hospitals or homes of relief—and so, like a sensible man, he left his money to the Church, which has the machinery and all the means and appliances for carrying on philanthropic work. Now, all this is im-

mensely significant, and the bearing of it will not be missed by the thoughtful. In all its books and publications and speeches infidelity is destructive in its thinking; it thinks evil of Christianity, as the scribes and Pharisees did of Christ; it thinks of it only to assail and attack and criticise, and hence its own barrenness. It has nothing to convert men to, no vital, positive, living thing to substitute for that which it would take away.

But aside from those who may fairly be classed as infidels, there are multitudes who deal with religion through their prejudices. When they think of it, they think of its defects and not of its merits, of its faults and not of its virtues, of its small divisions and not of its mighty unities. If there have been over-refining and misty speculation and a good deal of hair-splitting in matters of theology, they dwell upon these, and magnify them for purposes of criticism, rather than upon the practical, worldwide beneficence of religion. They see the specks on the window and overlook the sunshine that streams through laden with warmth and life and blessing. They see the flaws in the baking-pans, and the cracks in the stove, and the shortcomings of the cook, but have no eye for the bread that goes out to feed the

hungry in every part of the earth. The unfairness, the unwisdom of all this should be evident enough. It is really hard to be patient with men, hard to believe in their sincerity, when they reject Christianity because of certain little peddling questions and difficulties about baptism, or election, or the devil. There is the great river of the Cross, cleansing and elevating and enriching humanity wherever its waters come. On it go all vessels of every keel cargoes with the merchandise of the kingdom of God. Why don't they launch their boats upon it and sail away on voyages of service and not stay for ever fault-finding and speck-seeing and cavilling upon its banks?

The institutions of Christianity are everywhere; its schools and colleges and missions and churches and its countless agencies for ministering to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual uplifting of men are in evidence toward every point of the compass. It has a thousand hands stretched out to help, and tens of thousands of forces at work to restrain evil, to beat back iniquity, to overcome vice, and to develop the conscience of society and turn its thought upward to God. No one denies that, as it has passed through the alembic of human thinking and through

the channels of human prejudice, not a few imperfections have fastened upon it; but think of it constructively; think of its achievements; think of its benefits and blessings; of its hopes and inspirations; of the stimulus it gives to education, and of all the good seed that it scatters in every field of the world—think of all this and of an immense deal more which cannot now be named, and you will be convinced that Christianity has the strongest possible claims upon you and every other reasonable man. Think of the old ship constructively; think of the storms it has weathered, of the rich freightage it has brought to mankind, of the safe passage it has given to countless millions of our race, of the port for which it is sailing, of the fact that its Captain has been around the stormy cape, called Death, which all of us must double some day—and if you think earnestly enough, and seriously enough, and profoundly enough, you will say, “I am going aboard. That is the ship for me. It is somewhat old. There is an absence of novelty and a lack of up-to-date attractions about it. I see no varnish, no glittering veneer, no brand-new polish, and I detect no odour of cologne and lavender. But it looks strong and staunch and seaworthy; there is something about

it that inspires confidence ; and then its Captain seems so thoughtful, so wise, so masterful, and withal so kind and gentle, that I am going to embark for the long voyage on this ship." I feel very sure that something like this would be the result of constructive thinking about Christianity.

The mischief of thinking destructively is seen also in relation to the Bible. There are a few things in it that challenge the reason, certain stories and miracles and astounding narratives which stagger the intelligence and make very heavy demands upon rational belief. Take, for example, the story of the serpent and the apple in Eden, the story of the plagues in Egypt, the story of Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still and they obeyed, the story of Jonah and the whale, and the story of the Gadarene swine. You know how criticism has attacked these stories, and how ridicule has laughed at them, and how infidelity has made them the butt of many a shallow and irreverent joke.

Then much of the Bible has been objected to on moral grounds. We are told that there are portions of it too vile to be read in company, or even in private ; portions of it to which it would be a sin to call the attention of pure and innocent childhood. I remember how

the late Colonel Ingersoll thundered against some passages of the Old Testament ; declared that the book in which they were found was unfit to be in the home. He characterised them as indecent and obscene and abominable. Others have taken a similar view. Certain chapters in Leviticus they have described as "filthy litanies," and incidents and scenes in the Bible have been referred to as too hideous and loathsome for publication.

Now, these things are in the book ; but they do not by any means justify the conclusions of those who think destructively. If a man were to go into an orchard and condemn a tree because of an occasional worm or caterpillar's nest in its branches, he would be considered hasty and unreasonable. Of course the worm and the web are not pleasant things to look at ; but after all, if the tree is to be judged righteously it must be judged by its fruit. If that is good and wholesome, the tree must be good also. We ask nothing more for the Bible. Who has ever yet run upon a young person, or an old person, that was corrupted and tainted with immorality by reading this book ? We know that we can put it into the hands of our children, and tell them to read it all, and read it again, and re-read it, with absolute safety. We know

that wherever in society there is the most Bible study and most absorption of the Bible spirit, there is the most purity, the most integrity, the most stalwart morality, the most hatred of iniquity.

The Bible is a medicine book. It comes with healing for a disease that is in the very blood of the soul. And as a medicine book it gives us a faithful and awful picture of the malady that afflicts our race. Suppose a great and learned and good physician, writing a book on cancer, or leprosy, or some other deadly disease, for the guidance of men, were to omit certain repulsive features and refuse to blacken his pages with them; or suppose, out of deference to the susceptibilities of certain nice people, a physician should bar from his library all medical books unfit to be read in the family circle or to a Sunday-school class, what would we say? I am sure such a physician as either of these would forfeit all claim to our respect.

Now, the Old Testament contains the pathology and diagnosis of sin; the New Testament its therapeutics. The one points out the symptoms and manifestations and characteristics of the deadly thing; the other prescribes the remedy. Hence there is much in the Old Testament that is necessarily revolting,

because sin is revolting. The pages that describe it are blistered with tears and dripped with blood and splashed with mud, and slimy with the trail of the serpent. They so portray it as to make it loathsome and disgusting. They show us the worm crawling amid the branches of the tree of life, and its web decaying and killing the leaves and the blossoms. They hold sin up before us as a most heinous and dreadful thing; and for this reason the destructive thinkers, the inveterate critics, object. If they had been writing a Bible they would have touched sin very daintily, if at all. They would have wreathed it about with flowers to hide its ugliness, and sprayed a little rose-water upon it and sweetened it with perfume so as not to offend fastidious readers. But in so doing they would have discredited their own inspiration and given us a book with no claim to Divine authority.

Think of the book constructively. Consider its spirit, its manifest purpose, its influence upon literature and life, upon governments and institutions; approach it without prejudice, with an honest, receptive mind, and it will speak to you, and enlarge you and lift you, and give you a broader outlook than all other books put together. Abraham Lincoln,

with his vast common sense, with his marvellous balance of judgment, with that unclouded candour of soul that threw his whole nature open to truth, writing to his friend, Joshua Speed, said: "I am now engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this book you can on reason. Take the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better man." That is the constructive spirit, and I most heartily commend it.

Referring to art, John Ruskin says: "No man is competent to judge of the merits of a picture if he looks only at its faults." That is true in all directions and in every sphere of life. If a man's purpose is simply to find flaws in the Bible, or to raise questions about its difficulties, he is utterly disqualified to sit in judgment upon it. He is one-sided and altogether incompetent to treat the book with fairness. Whatever a man of that spirit may say or write about it is entitled to no weight with thoughtful people.

But now consider for a moment the mischief of thinking destructively in regard to persons. You know how common it is for people to make the shortcomings and inconsistencies of professing Christians an excuse for holding aloof from the Church membership. They see their faults and their crooked-

ness too much in evidence; see their twists and crooks and failures and weak points; see their selfishness and their meanness and deflections from the path of rectitude, and they call them sham Christians, pious pretenders, counterfeit followers of Jesus Christ, and so they refuse to march with that kind of company. Now, it is sadly confessed that there is some spurious coin in circulation, that there are some deceivers and hypocrites in the Church, some men and women enrolled on the books of Zion whose lives are glaringly inconsistent.

But the objectors to whom I refer know very well that they are not asked to be sham Christians. They know very well that they are asked to deal directly with Jesus Christ, and not with His professed disciples. Besides, they ought to see that they would be incompetent to criticise the inconsistencies of Christians if they did not know what genuine Christianity is; and if they know what genuine Christianity is how great must be their condemnation if they put it from them! It is difficult to adequately express the folly of rejecting the real because there are sham imitations. The truth is, it is never done anywhere else but in relation to religion. Sensible men never stay out of the medical

profession because there are quack doctors, or out of the legal profession because there are pettifogging lawyers, or out of mercantile life because there are shoddy merchants, or out of politics because there are boodling office-holders, or out of the banking business because counterfeit money exists. It is only when we come to Christianity that men too often take leave of their reason and good sense.

But let us be fair and honest. Christianity, as we see it exemplified in Church members, is not all pretence and veneer and make-believe. Think constructively, look at the good side, and you will see that our congregations are for the most part made up of very excellent people. They have their faults, even the best of them, but they have also their virtues. Think of them. Think who it is that keep up our Church services, that maintain our Sabbath Schools, that stand behind our missions, that keep alive the conscience of society, and give support to every good work for the betterment of the world. Think who it is that by organised effort and by personal sacrifice and by liberal contributions of money strike at entrenched iniquities and endeavour to promote the security of our homes and our business. No

doubt they are not as earnest as they might be; but in so far as this kind of work is done at all it is done mostly by those who are called Christians. Think of them constructively, think of the good they are doing, think of their gold, and not of their dross, and you will see that our communities owe them a debt that never can be paid.

The lesson is a good one for us all, whether in the Church or out. Nothing, I suppose, does more harm in the great seething, social world around us than the habit of thinking destructively. Thoughts are things, they are forces; and evil thoughts concerning our neighbours produce no end of mischief. Like begets like. You cannot think unkindly of your fellow-men without having them think unkindly of you. The spirit you cherish toward them passes over and becomes the spirit which they cherish toward you.

What we all need to do to promote our own happiness and the happiness of the world is to school ourselves to see the best in people, the best in things, the best in ourselves. That is what the Saviour did. He called the poor fishermen of Galilee who scarcely knew what education and refinement

and elegance were, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. If He had seen their worst and their weakest ; if He had thought of them disparagingly and suspected and distrusted them ; if He had given them to understand that not much was to be expected from such simple and obscure and poorly furnished men as they, their lives would have been a blank. But He thought the best of them, appealed to the best in them, made them feel that there were boundless possibilities in them, and they went forth to meet the grandeur of His challenge and to stand out in the blaze of fame for evermore. There are good points in the worst of men, there are redeeming features in the blackest of lives, there are jewels hidden away in the very vilest of human clay ; and if we did but think of these and give to them their full value, what a different world this would be ! The kingdom of heaven would come in very truth.

The whole philosophy of Christianity is found in the fact that God thinks of us constructively. He sees that men are worth saving—even the worst and most degraded of men—sees that there are boundless possibilities in them for growth and development in all that is pure and holy. He sees the

man in the leper, the son in the prodigal, the woman in the Magdalene, and that is the ideal at which we should aim; to think God's thoughts about people, to manifest God's sympathy, to come into harmony with God's purpose, and to move in the groove of God's will. We speak sometimes of talking a town up, of talking a Church up, or an institution up, or a man up, and we all know how much there is in it. But it is better to begin farther back and think people up, think of them constructively. Think of them kindly and lovingly, think of their good qualities, think that they, too, are precious in the sight of God; and the effect of it upon society would be most wholesome and elevating, and not only so, but it would lift and transform and ennoble us.

A VISION AND A VOLUNTEER

A VISION AND A VOLUNTEER

ISA. vi. 1-8.

IN a very deep and true sense it is what a man sees that either makes or unmakes him. The effect of vision upon character and service is transforming. It elevates or debases, according to its quality. Whether a man grovels or soars, whether he slimes his way with the worm or walks upon the hill-tops, whether he remains in the realm of animalism or rises into the spiritual and lives in the high places of the sons of God, is determined by his seeing. The men who shape history and direct the destinies of nations are the men who have eyes.

Moses saw the invisible and endured, struggled, conquered, lifted himself and his people into prominence for evermore. Saul of Tarsus, on the Damascus road, saw Jesus Christ, and out of that vision came a power of manhood that has thrown itself bene-

ficiently across twenty centuries. Luther, in his monk's cell, had a vision of the spiritual, and out of it came the Protestant Reformation, with all its forces of liberty and progress and enterprise. General Booth's tremendous success with the Salvation Army, an organisation which in less than a generation has belted the globe, is simply the realisation of what he saw. Because David Livingstone had eyes to see, Africa to-day is zoned with light, and that matchless career of his stands out before the world, and will ever stand, as an inspiration to the noblest efforts for human up-lifting. Because Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, He was thrilled by a sublime optimism, because He saw, as no one else has ever seen, His kingdom is coming, and will yet cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

It is a great thing to have eyes in the mind, to see with the soul, to pierce through the crust of things, and get down to inner meanings. This is really the difference between the man of education and the ignorant boor, between the slave of superstition and the man of science, between the filthy fakir and the intelligent worshipper of God. It is a difference of seeing. From a man like the late W. E. Gladstone, with his far-sighted

vision, to the illiterate Tom, Dick, and Harry of the under-world, the difference is almost measureless, the gulf is immense, and the thing that bridges that gulf is seeing.

Who are the prophets that come with messages for their age—the Isaiahs, the Savonarolas, and Wesleys, and Garrisons, whose ideas and principles change the courses of history, but men who see? Beholding great sights, they perform great deeds. Visions of freedom, of chains broken, of slaves liberated, of oppressions taken away, have been the fountain-heads of all the religious and civil and constitutional liberty in the world at this hour. Because some men, in the centuries gone, had eyes to see we have the flag of the free and the home of the brave. Back of all emancipations and reforms, back of all patriotisms and philanthropies, back of all benefactions and benevolences, yea, back of all invention and discovery, is that prolific mother which we call vision. Men first see something with their mind, and then proceed to do something. If Thomas A. Edison is, perhaps, the greatest inventor of the age, it is because he is the greatest seer. What are ideas but visions of the soul, something seen with the inner eye? and the translation of those ideas, or visions, into facts is the explanation of all

progress and all civilisation. If Christian men and women anywhere to-day are inactive, indifferent, unconcerned, it is chiefly because they do not see. Now, with this introduction, let me read to you a remarkable passage from the prophecy of Isaiah.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who

will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me." The first thing we have to do with, you observe, is—

1. A vision of God. Isaiah at this time was a young man, not yet, I imagine, devoted to anything definite in life. He was simply wavering on the edge of things, scarcely knowing what to do with himself. While in this condition of uncertainty one day he went into the temple, and there beheld a sight that lived in his soul for ever. Whether objective or subjective does not matter, so far as the purpose of this discussion is concerned. The vision stayed with him as a constant inspiration, and made him a fearless and mighty prophet of God. He says: "I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," and that vision was the secret of all his courage and all his consecration and all his sacred eloquence.

Read the lives of the apostles and you will find that it was their God-consciousness, their faculty of seeing the Divine, of living as in the presence of the Infinite Majesty, that made them so irresistible. They saw God; they realised God. They hid themselves in God, as in the munitions of rocks. In God they lived and moved and had their being. This was especially true of Paul, and hence the marvel-

lous dynamic of his life. Think what must have been the power of a man who could not only touch and shake his own age out of its superstition, but touch with constantly accumulating force all subsequent ages, until at this hour his influence is felt in every part of the globe. Such a man was Paul.

The man who sees God in all events, who makes God his philosophy of history, who backs up, so to speak, against the Almighty, can never be put down. It was this that made Huguenot and Puritan and Covenanters so invincible. The main factor in all their calculations was God. They went into battle with the great Name upon their lips, and pillowed their heads upon it by night. In all the shock and upheaval of the great days in which they lived, they were steadfast and immovable, because, with their inner eyes, they saw the Lord.

Look into the Gospels, and see how even Jesus was sustained and borne up by His consciousness of God. The infinite Father was more real to Him than the Judean hills and rocks. Whether in the midst of the loneliness of the mountain-side or in the midst of the curious multitude, He was always ready to have a word with His Father. Material boundaries and limitations were nothing to

Him. He stepped across and refreshed His soul by communion with the highest. He moved serenely on, He endured, He suffered, He walked calmly up to Calvary's tragic and awful death, because He saw God. What was true of Him and of the apostles and prophets has been true all along the pathway of history. Wherever you find a great awakening of the Church, wherever you run upon a mighty revival of religion, shaking and overturning society, there you never fail to find some fresh vision of God. If ever there has been a noise and a shaking among the dry bones, if ever they have come together, bone to bone, and been clothed upon with flesh, and made to live and stand up, an exceeding great army, the explanation of it all was some renewed vision of God. The eyes of men have been opened to see, and out of their seeing have come progress and victory for the Church.

Need I remark that on both sides of the sea and throughout Christendom there is a growing conviction that this is the one great need of the Church to-day? If there is apathy, if there is coldness, if there is worldliness, if missions languish, if converts are few, if in many places the religion of the Crucified is barely holding its own, if Christian machinery

multiplies and Christian efficiency seems to diminish, it is owing to a lack of vision. Our modern Isaiahs, our standard-bearers, and our members in the rank and file do not see the Lord. Let us confess it frankly and with penitent self-accusation. Eyes for things of the dust, eyes for material gains and material pleasures, eyes for the attractions of Mammon, of fashion, of amusement, eyes for the smoking "lamps that skirt the sluggish river of time," but no eyes for the great Light, no eyes for the spiritual, no eyes for the eternal, no eyes for God and His kingdom. That, precisely, is the difficulty. We laugh sometimes at the Christian Scientists, and we marvel at their enthusiasm. It seems inexplicable. Various solutions are suggested. But perhaps it may be accounted for by vision. Perhaps their earnestness and their growth and their confidence and their power come from their seeing, or from what they think they see. And one can say this without giving the slightest endorsement to this greatest of all the religious fads of modern times.

At any rate, the people who see great sights are the people who do great deeds.

There is that young man in Boston, polished, cultured, eloquent. He has no thought of a strenuous and heroic life. But one day the

quiet of his office is disturbed by a mob in the street maltreating Wm. Lloyd Garrison and dragging him off toward jail, because he dared to befriend a black man. It set the young man's blood on fire. Before his mind passed the vision of the slave, shackled, scourged, forsaken, rising into liberty and manhood. He looked, and was transformed, and said to the voice that spoke within him, "Here am I, send me." From that hour his matchless gift of speech was consecrated to the cause of freedom for the negro, and with what power he spoke, and how well he did his work, history will never forget to tell.

Every reform, every invention, every splendid business enterprise, every upward movement of civilisation, was a vision before it became a fact. It lived in the mind before it was made flesh and dwelt tangibly before men. It is not otherwise in the Church. If we are at ease in Zion, if we are satisfied with small things, small successes, or no success, it is because we are blind. Never shall we become doers until we are first of all seers. Only let us see the Lord, and the hosts of Israel will go forward. When the Julia Ward Howes of liberty and of the Church begin to sing—

"Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord,"

the armies of deliverance will soon begin to march ; something will soon be done. I am glad to believe that this hour seems to be dawning again. There are arrows of light piercing the shadows all around the horizon. I may be wrong about it, but it seems to me that the leaven of vision in the high spiritual sense is yeasting and working and swelling in all the great Church loaf to-day. Here and there prophets are rising again who are looking over the border into the unseen, drinking out of invisible fountains, and are pointing to promised lands on the other side of the wilderness. Here and there they are making the people tired of a mere yard-stick and market-place and counting-room kind of life, and are filling them with longings after the spiritual. These signs may be taken as the first droppings of a gracious rain which God is soon to send upon His Church ; but if He does, it will come from seeing the Lord.

II. But next in importance to a vision of God is a vision of ourselves. So far as we know, Isaiah was a young man of excellent character. No doubt he had the confidence and respect of all who knew him. The probabilities are that his life was above reproach. But when he got a glimpse of the Infinite Holiness he cried out, "Woe is me ! for I am

undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." No man can see God aright without feeling just as Isaiah did. When that vision rises up before him, all his pride, all his self-sufficiency, all the small moralities on which he is building will seem to him like blight and mildew on the leaves and flowers. Over against the Divine perfection his own righteousness will appear as filthy rags.

One of the great mistakes we are constantly tempted to make in forming an estimate of our character and the quality of our manhood and womanhood, is that we insist upon comparing ourselves with ourselves.

We set man over against man and class against class. Alongside of the debauchery of many we are decent indeed. Alongside of the vile we are virtuous. Alongside of the grasping we are generous. Alongside of the loathsome we are attractive. And so society is conveniently divided up into what we call good and bad, pure and impure, conscientious and criminal, Godlike and devil-like. The tendency of it is to make those who walk on the uplands of respectability conceited and self-complacent. There is, to be sure, a vast

difference between the honest and the dishonest, between the morally high and the morally low—a difference as great as that between the clear mountain stream and the stagnant, festering pond—but at the same time it is nothing at all in comparison with the difference between the holiest man on earth and the holiness of God.

If you want to know whether your boy can play the violin, compare him, not with the common fiddler of the street, but with Paganini. If you want to know the quality of a piece of music, do not compare it with the jingle tunes of some in our Sunday-school books, or the rag-time of the low dance-house, but with the sublime symphonies of Beethoven. If you want to know whether your daughter can paint, bring the best production of her brush and set it down beside the "Last Judgment" of Michael Angelo. The alderman in the city council may talk well, even eloquently, if you compare him with the ignorant hack-driver, or crossing-sweeper, or hod-carrier; but bring in a Demosthenes, or a Pitt, or a Webster, or a John Bright, and he is worse than a stammerer. The cabin of the poor labourer is a palace if you contrast it with the Indian's wigwam of our Western plains; but how

infinitely mean and insignificant it seems alongside of the Waldorf-Astoria!

Everything depends upon the standard or type or model from which we take our measurements. We who sit here to-day are splendid people, veritable paragons of virtue and goodness, compared with some other people on the face of the earth—the cannibals of Central Africa, for example, or the Patagonians of South America, or the wretched dwarfs whom Stanley found on the Upper Congo, or the miserable slum dwellers of our crowded cities—splendid people; but what becomes of all our splendour when we look into the face of God? The whitest piece of linen looks yellow when cast out upon newly-fallen snow; the brightest candle that ever burned would look like a shadow if placed near the mighty search-light of a modern battleship; that search-light itself would look black if held up in front of the noon-day sun; and that is how Isaiah appeared to himself when his eyes beheld the King, the Lord of hosts. So you and I would seem to ourselves if we did but seek a vision of God. One look at His ineffable purity would overwhelm us with a sense of shame and cause our proud heads to fall upon our sobbing breasts. All that is conventional would be swept away; all our

pride would collapse like a bubble ; out of the depths the heart would speak and say, "Woe is me ! for I am undone." When Job saw the Lord, you remember, he abhorred himself, and from that hour his captivity was turned. Seeing God we see ourselves ; and the whole history of Christian progress will bear me out when I say that until men get this double vision they never amount to very much in Christian life and service.

I trust I may not be charged with making an unkind impeachment if I suggest that the one great weakness of our pulpits to-day, and the one great weakness of our Church membership everywhere, is a sense of self-sufficiency, a self-complacent feeling of worth and importance, an over-weening consciousness of merit, and a vanishing sense of the heinousness of sin, first of all in ourselves and then in the world around us. The only thing that can burn all this away and bring back apostolic earnestness and consecration is a vision of God. Most of you, I presume, have read the sweet and touching story which Professor Austin Phelps tells of Dannecker, the German sculptor. For eight weary years he laboured upon a marble statue of the Christ. When he had worked upon it for two years it seemed to him that the statue was finished. What

more could he do to add to its perfection? To test the matter, however, one day he called a little girl into his studio, and, directing her attention to the statue, said, "Who is that?" She replied promptly, "A great man." He turned away disheartened. He felt that he had failed, and that his two years of labour had been lost. But he began anew. He toiled on for six years more, and then, inviting another little child into his studio, repeated the inquiry, "Who is that?" This time he was not disappointed. After looking in silence awhile, the child's curiosity deepened away into awe and reverence, and bursting into tears, she said softly, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." It was enough. The untutored instinct of the child had led her to the right conclusion and he knew that his work was a success.

Dannecker declared afterwards that in his solitary vigils he had seen a vision of Christ, and had but transferred to the marble the image which the Lord had shown him. Some time later Napoleon Bonaparte requested him to make a statue of Venus for the gallery of the Louvre. But he refused, saying, "A man who has seen Christ would commit sacrilege if he should employ his art in the carving of a pagan goddess. My art henceforth is a conse-

crated thing." Something like that, I am sure, would be the spirit of Christian preachers and Christian people if they saw the King, the Lord of hosts. To devote themselves to lower things or to lower themes; to allow themselves to become absorbed with fashion and display and worldly pleasure; to give themselves up to these pagan goddesses, after such a vision as that, would make them feel that they were committing sacrilege indeed. Oh, if we did but see the King, the Lord of hosts, what preaching we should have, and what living we should have! for always it is those who see great sights that do great deeds and develop great lives.

One time, at a meeting of the General Assembly, an effort was made to raise funds enough to send a young Princeton graduate to India as a missionary. A teacher in a home mission school was seen by her hostess to slip a gold ring from her finger and put it on the collection plate. Asked afterwards by the lady whose guest she was why she did it, she replied, "Because I had no money, and because I knew what it would mean if the effort to send this missionary failed." Not long before she had been told that she would have to give up her own school because there were no funds to support it. But she would

not give it up. She held on with magnificent heroism, and she contributed the ring with all its sacred associations to help another do what was so dear to her own heart.

Next morning a commissioner brought the ring into the General Assembly and told the story of it. It was worth about five dollars. "I will give five dollars to send the ring back to the young woman," said a minister. "I will give five dollars," said the stated clerk. A newspaper reporter handed up five dollars to the platform. Pastors, missionaries, visitors, came forward eagerly with the cash, each one eager to have some share in restoring the ring. In less than ten minutes more than \$300 had been passed up to the desk. It was all caused by the vision they got of the self-sacrificing love that flamed in the heart of that little woman, making her glad to do something for her dear Master.

Brethren, if we did but see Jesus lifted up upon the cross; if we did but look into the face of the Crucified; if in the light of that face our eyes were opened to see ourselves as we are, opened to see the love of God for a lost world, and that world's need of a Saviour, what men and women we would be; how our hearts would open, and our lips speak, and our benevolence flow out like a river! All we

need to make us evangelists and soul-winners is to see. If we could be struck down like Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road by light flaming from the person of Christ, like him we would rise to our feet, Divine in consecration, irresistible in power, and leave a shining pathway wherever we went among the Gentiles. All great Christian souls, all the great leaders in Zion, must be crushed and humiliated by an excess of light before they go forth to conquer. Would God the whole ministry might go into the temple and see, or up the Damascus road! For illustration, let us turn again to Isaiah. After getting a vision of God and a vision of himself, observe, he—

III. Becomes a volunteer. In response to the voice of the Lord, which said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he replied, "Here am I, send me." Nothing could be more practical than that. He has no thought of any second or third person answering the call. The vision does not evaporate in sighing, or dreaming, or in suggesting what this or that man should do, but immediately crystallises into personal service. When a man in a tremendous experience like this reaches the point where he says, "Send me," we can have no question as

to his earnestness. He means it through and through.

But there is an intermediate step here which must not be overlooked. As soon as Isaiah saw himself in the light of the Infinite Holiness and cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone"; as soon as a genuine penitence seized upon his life and melted him into humble, heart-breaking contrition, one of the seraphim flew—mark the word, it is wonderfully sweet—FLEW, so swift is the forgiving love of God when He sees a man broken in spirit by a sense of his unworthiness—and said, "Lo, thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." That step was absolutely necessary before he could become an evangel to his people. An unconverted prophet can do nothing but magnify his own incompetency. A man who has no grip upon God cannot grip the consciences of the people and turn their thought upward. Unconverted Church members can bring no sheaves into God's garner. How shall those who have never tasted of the water of life themselves bring others to the fountain? If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. By multiplying thousands evangelism is felt to be the great need of the Church to-day, and we are glad of it. No sign could be more hopeful. God is laying

upon those who preach and upon those who bear His name the burden of souls. Let us pray that the burden may increase until the whole Church is aroused and recruiting for the Lord becomes once more a passion. But the first condition of successful evangelism is personal cleansing and purification. Only the truly converted, only those who have put away sin and tasted of the heavenly gift, and have a real heart experience of Jesus Christ, can be used by the Holy Spirit in bringing others to conversion.

Shall I trouble you with a notable instance in proof? For seven years the celebrated Dr. Thomas Chalmers occupied a pulpit and preached with splendid eloquence before he had an experience in his own soul of the renewing power of God. His ministry was the sensation of the hour. Great crowds thronged his church, and hundreds were turned away for lack of room. His name and fame were sounded far and wide throughout the land, but there were no permanent results. The intellect and taste of the people and their love of oratory were delighted and gratified, but their consciences were unpricked. The ploughshare did not cut down into the deep places of their moral nature.

He has left on record the sad and humiliat-

ing testimony that his preaching during those years did not have "the weight of a feather on the morals of his parishioners." But there came a day when he was laid aside by illness. In this illness he saw the King, the Lord of hosts. In that vision he saw himself, and his heart was broken with contrition. The formal gave place to the vital, the professional to the real, and the whole man was transformed. He was as new a man as Isaiah was that day when he came out of the temple. His health returned. He went back into his pulpit, and all Scotland was shaken. From that day on his ministry was mighty in its evangelism. The lips, eloquent before, were touched with the fire of God, and that fire burned its way into the hearts of men and brought them to their knees in repentance and to Jesus for salvation. When that crisis came and that sharp angle was turned, it was no longer a question of drawing the multitudes, or of winning applause, or of cutting a great figure as a pulpit orator. The one thing that absorbed and controlled him was to lead sinners to the Cross and to build men and women up in Christ Jesus.

It was Isaiah's genuine conversion that led to his whole-hearted consecration and caused him to say, "Here am I, send me." He has

no terms to dictate, no suggestions to offer, no programme to outline, no pulpit to choose. The surrender is complete. The whole citadel of his manhood, outworks and all, has yielded to his Lord, and he simply says, "Send me—send me anywhere, send me into any field. Send me up the hill or down into the valley. Send me into the slums or out upon the avenues. Send me where the work is hard and the pay small, into city or country, into obscure place or conspicuous, to my own people, or to foreign people, only send me. Do not let me run without tidings, uncommissioned from above, unauthorised, unanointed, but send me, and send me now, that I may go and tell the people of the love of God." That was the spirit of the young man Isaiah, and no wonder he towers up in biblical history as the great evangelical prophet.

Oh, if it were my spirit and your spirit! And it would be if we saw the King, the Lord of hosts. If we do not serve, it is because we do not see. If we do not volunteer, it is because we have no vision. If we have no "Here am I, send me," to answer to the Lord's call, it is because our eyes are holden by the things of this world. If we are not active and earnest; if we are not eager to tell of the love of God and send out this blessed evangel of

the Cross through the homeland and through lands beyond the sea, it is because we have not seen Jesus Christ. We have allowed Him to be hidden behind the smoke and dust and fog of the world. Brethren, what we need to-day to quicken us, to arouse us, to kindle us with a holy zeal, to beget within us a cheerful readiness, to convert us from our apathy into helpers and lifters and leaders and followers, is to see God.

THE MAKING OF MAN

THE MAKING OF MAN

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”—GEN. i. 26.

RIGHT conceptions of men are scarcely less important than right conceptions of God. If we think of ourselves as being only higher animals, or the product of some mysterious process of nature, or the last result of evolution, the outcome of certain primordial germs, the conception will inevitably leave its legitimate marks upon us. Let a man take a low and material view of himself, let him trace his pedigree to a material origin, and let him see nothing ahead but annihilation or a leap into the dark—a brute's beginning and a brute's ending—and he need not be expected to rise very high in moral character or in anything pure and lofty and heroic. To think meanly and unworthily of oneself is to be essentially mean, and of the earth earthy. For we are so made that we can never get away from the influence of our own thinking.

We can no more rise above the plane of our highest thought than the bird can rise above the uplift of his own wings.

I am, therefore, to speak to you this morning upon the Biblical Conception of Man. It is profoundly significant that the notions of man entertained by the great scientists and philosophers and scholars are grand and lofty just as they approach the estimate of man found in the Word of God. It is a suggestion that ought to have some weight with us; for it shows how wonderfully this old book has anticipated the highest thinking of the ages. Let the ablest university president in the world draw a full-length portrait of a man; let him clothe him with the noblest attributes, and endow him with the sublimest qualities of character—love, truth, justice, purity, courage, patience, immortality—and when he has done his best, he has simply approximated the standard of the Bible. It raises this question, which I merely throw out and leave with you, namely, How is it that the Bible, as a moral and spiritual teacher, is always ahead of the most progressive and gifted leaders and thinkers of mankind? Work it out for yourselves.

Our text is not only remarkable for what it contains, but for the way in which it is intro-

duced. It represents a solemn consultation on the part of the Godhead. The light, the waters, the dry land, the heavenly bodies, the vegetable and animal worlds have heard the omnific voice and sprung into being. All the lower orders of creation have been made ; and now there is a pause. Man is about to be created, and behold, there is Divine deliberation. Before such a step is taken, before such a creature is launched into existence, the probable issue must be considered. His relations to heaven and earth must be taken into account, his freedom of will, his self-determination, his ability to defy the Almighty, and rebel against his Creator, must be pondered upon. It is a most solemn event. For in man the universe is to receive its crown. I am simply reciting the impression which the creation narrative makes upon the careful reader. It is as though in the council chambers of eternity, when the material creation was finished, and everything pronounced good, there was a solemn pause, and then God Almighty, speaking on behalf of the blessed Trinity, said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

I. Thus, according to the Biblical conception, man was made in the image of God.

This, of course, cannot refer to his body

for on that side of our nature we must be classed with the animals. The whole plan and structure of our physical frame we hold in common with the brutes, as the most hasty glance at comparative anatomy will suffice to show. There is not a bone in the human body that is not also in the body of every member of the monkey family. The constituent elements of the human body are in no wise different from those which make up the bodies of the beasts of the field. They came from the dust, and to the dust they are destined to return. The Bible teaching is that man's physical investiture—this house of clay, which we call the body—was made of pre-existing material; and there is nothing in the creation story of the Bible that militates against the view that the body was evolved. A great multitude of thoroughly orthodox thinkers and leaders believe and teach that on the lower side of our nature we must be put in the same category with the animals, our only distinction being that we stand at the head. If I understand Dr. Archibald Alexander, Dr. Hodge, and Dr. James McCosh, this was their view, and it was also the view of Professor Dana. Our bodies are just as dependent upon the world below as our spirits are upon the world above us. Every day we feed

and nourish our physical nature upon flesh of birds, and flesh of beasts, and upon vegetable food, and substances that are wholly material. Why, then, should we shrink from the thought that our bodies have been derived, through processes of evolution, from creatures far beneath us. I see nothing degrading in that relationship. The only thing to blush for and be ashamed of is sin.

It is only when we come to the spirit that we take issue with the materialistic evolutionist. God made man's body out of the dust of the earth, but He created his soul, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The word for "breath" is precisely the same word which is elsewhere translated spirit, and the meaning is that God imparted to man His own spirit, or His own nature. It is this that lifts him into pre-eminence among the creatures, and this that gives him the image and likeness of God, this that makes him man. He is a thinking, reasoning, moral being. But when we say that God breathed into man his own spirit, it is not to be construed to mean that the human spirit is a part or a particle of the Divine spirit. That is not only metaphysically absurd, but profane in its tendency. It is an idea that begets in us a feeling of revulsion. Extension is one

of the qualities of matter; matter can be enlarged or diminished; matter is composed of elements that can be united or separated; matter can be divided; but spirit is indivisible; you cannot cut it up into pieces; you cannot make a spirit larger or smaller; so that it will not do to say that God gave to man a part of His own spirit. If He did, then man would be possessed of the same attributes—eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, absolute perfection, and so on to the end of the list, which, of course, cannot be received for a moment. The parent does not give a part of his soul to his offspring. He gives tendencies, and inclinations, and susceptibilities. But every soul is one and indivisible. For every new body that is made God creates a new soul. Into the new body He breathes His own spirit; so that man is like God, or the image of God only in the moral sense.

Referring to the words, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," one of the keenest and most powerful thinkers of our time says that it is blasphemy if it is not true. Consider how such a statement involves the character of God. Pick out some great and famous architect, and then go down into the slums of the city and point to certain

unsightly and dilapidated buildings, and say he made them, and it certainly would not be very complimentary. Ascribe trashy and worthless literature to Emerson, Carlyle, or Macaulay, and you insult their memories. Say that Beethoven, or Handel, or Mozart composed music of the jingle sort, and you pour contempt upon their genius. And yet we say, God made man. Go down into the dives and dens of iniquity and look at him; into prisons, into jails, into garrets and cellars, into reeking sweat-shops, and behold this wonderful masterpiece of God. There he is, low-browed and beastly; there he is, drunken and debauched; there he is, sneaking and cringing like a criminal; there he is, foolish and false and filthy; there he is, plotting the ruin of his fellow, wallowing in the mire, standing with both feet in hell; deformed in mind, deformed in body, degraded, corruption burning and festering in the hot currents of his blood, disease eating away his life, a poor wasted, worthless wreck. And yet we say, "This is the image of God." He frets, and struts, and fumes, and plays the fool; he lies, and masks, and babbles, and eats swine's food, and we say, "This is a copy of Deity." On the brazen brow of the strumpet, on the narrow forehead of the pugilist, on the leering face of

the idiot, on the cruel face of the murderer, we write—"The Image of God." It seems like infinite mockery. Can God Almighty do no better than that? Is this a specimen of His architecture? And yet here is the text. We are solemnly assured that God made man in His own likeness. Surely infinite wisdom never made such a lame attempt at reproduction.

Or look at man when he is at his best; erect, broad-browed, clear-eyed. Look at him educated, cultured, and refined; writing books, making Senates ring with his eloquence, wresting from Nature her secrets, unravelling the mysteries of the earth. Look at him when he stands highest, and how weak, and frail, and imperfect he is after all! He is afraid of the night air; he coughs when the wind smites him. He smarts under criticism. He yields to prejudice. He becomes the tool of ambition, the slave of wealth and power. And yet we say proudly of this man, who is so dainty, and so sensitive to praise or blame, and so easily warped and swept away on this current or that, "He is the image of God!" Again, I say, it seems like mockery.*

Now, what is the solution of the difficulty? Simply this—we are not thinking of the

* See Joseph Parker, D.D., on Genesis, p. 111.

right man at all. We must strip him of all sin. We must eliminate all that is devilish. We must take away the trail of the serpent and think of the ideal man. Let us picture to ourselves what man may become. Let us set before our eyes the noblest specimen of our race. Let us think of the "man within the man, the possible within the actual," and we shall get a glimpse of the man whom God made. We shall conclude that after all he is not unworthy of his Divine prototype. Jesus, the Christ, is the ideal humanity, the absolutely perfect model, the express image and likeness of God; and to see the man whom God made in His own image we must look at Him. He is the ultimate man, the complete, the finished man, and toward him all the centuries are moving. He is the crown and culmination of all dispensations, and struggles, and revolutions. This is the philosophy of history; this is the explanation of all social conflict and upheaval—it is man straining, and striving, and climbing up to his Divine ideal.

II. But these apparent mockeries of our text which we see everywhere around us, these human wrecks and ruins which confront us at every turn and angle of life, these striking imperfections which manifest

themselves even in the highest manhood, remind us in the second place that according to the Biblical conception man is a sinner. The Bible never stops to argue the question. The sad fact is so evident, so glaring, so universally obtrusive and emergent that it is everywhere assumed by the Holy Scriptures. One does not need to belabour his brain to prove that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain. Something is sadly wrong. The sighs, and the tears, and the woes, and the heart-aches, and the sorrows, and the sufferings which we see, and feel, and hear; the clash, and friction, and conflict, and antagonism, apparent everywhere from slum to avenue, and all over the world, are proof enough that man is a sinner. As well spend time under a cloudless noonday trying to prove that the sun shines as to spend time trying to prove that men are depraved. No matter what the theorist says, no matter what the dreamer affirms, there is the fact. But the fact of sin is to be accounted for. How did it get into the world? Evolution does not explain it; evolution, from base to pinnacle, is built upon pre-existing material. It can only unfold that which has been infolded. If the chicken is not potentially in the egg,

it is certain that no process of incubation, long or short, can ever hatch it out. You cannot get more water out of a vessel than was originally put in. Evolution and involution must be equal. If, then, sin did not inhere in the original matter, if there was no sin in the far-away lower orders of creation, it nevertheless somehow got in; for sin is here. If sin is the outcome of evolution, just as everything else is said to be, then it must be a part of a great necessity, and therefore why punish it? Why hold men responsible for that which they cannot help? Why condemn and load with penalty a thing that can no more be avoided than the revolutions of the earth?

However much men may theorise about sin in their class-rooms, and lecture-halls, and on the printed page, their theories break down utterly in the prosy realm of practice. No criminal, no law-breaker is ever excused if he stands before the judge and says, "I could not help it; I am only the agent of necessity." Man's acts are his own. Everywhere he is dealt with as a free moral agent. Grant, if you please, that he started as a little speck of protoplasm, that he came up, step by step, from the lowest forms of life; that he ascended through millions of

ages from beasthood to manhood. Take that genealogy, if you prefer it, to the genealogy of Saint Luke—but how does that account for sin? Men do wrong; they bite and devour; they cheat and kill; they slander and slay; and the question is, Where and how did sin begin? It is here; and it must have had a starting-point. A germ cannot sin; protoplasm cannot sin; the beasts cannot sin; evolving material life cannot sin. Sin belongs to man; and again it raises the question, Where did sin come from? It is a mystery that has never been fathomed. Why did the pure, and holy, and infinitely good God ever allow sin to exist? If nothing exists outside of his own being, which he did not create, how did sin ever come to be? The well is deep, and I have no plummet which can reach its bottom. Men may laugh at the Eden story and make merry over the Biblical explanation of sin; but until they can furnish a better one their sneers only reveal their shallowness. It has been illustrated in this way by one of our greatest thinkers, and I give you the illustration for what it is worth. You have a violin that is in perfect tune. You hang it upon the wall, and go away for a season. After some months you return, and you find that

it is all out of tune. You do not accuse any one of having done it. You simply say it got out of tune. This, he supposes, is the way in which sin began. Through inattention, through defect in obedience, defect in faith, defect in love. It was an omission; and through the slacking of the strings, through an imperceptible dropping down from the key, through this small rift in the lute, a little discord began; and then a little more, and a little more, until out of this came all the world's woe, and the sad separation between God and man—a separation which can be bridged over only by the Cross of Jesus Christ. But, after all our explanations and illustrations, we come back to this, that man is a sinner, and that his sin turns upon the freedom of his own will. It is this that gives him his grandeur, this that makes it such an awful thing to live. The very fact that he can be a sinner proclaims his majesty and the infinite possibilities of his being. He can make his bed in hell; but he can also point to a glittering crown, and say, "By the grace of God that diadem shall be mine." He can wallow in the mire; he can gloat over iniquity; he can revel in moral slime and filth; or he can climb the hills of God, and walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

III. And this leads me to say that, according to the Biblical conception, man is immortal. The animals die; the stars grow old and disappear; the worlds and constellations that fill the azure spaces are creatures of time; their existence is measured by years. But man is immortal. He is not a child of time, but a child of eternity. He has entered upon a journey that will stretch on, and on, and on for ever. It is a thought before whose significance everything else pales and fades away. His houses go, his lands go, his moneys go, his offices and positions go, but he himself remains. There is no back door, no suicide's portal, no hole through which he can steal out of being. He must exist, and exist, and exist, whether he wants to or not. How supreme, how measureless the importance, therefore, of heading in the right direction! for the bad man must go on as well as the good man; but in the nature of things they must journey back to back. We have spoken of evolution, and glanced back over the road along which man is said to have come up to his present condition. That is not to be despised or to be treated lightly. Let us honour the men who interest themselves in the origin of species and the beginnings of things. Genesis is no more

to be skipped in nature than in the Bible. It broadens our horizon, it enlarges our outlook. It adds immensely to our stock of knowledge to be informed as to sources and fountain-heads. But, dear friends, there is something infinitely more weighty. The best way to get into port is not to keep the eyes for ever astern. This great worldship in which we are sailing is not moving backward, but forward. Destiny, destiny, therefore, is the thing to be concerned about. I am moving over the sea; the swift years are dropping behind; the shoreline of the past sinks away into the haze; and am I a fanatic, am I unreasonable if I give a great deal of consideration to the landing? What does it matter what I was or where I was a million of ages ago? But it does concern me profoundly to know where and what I shall be in the ages to come. It is all right enough to be curious about my pedigree. If my progenitors were animals, it is well enough to know it. It does not horrify me in the least, if only the line is long enough. But suppose I know all about it, suppose I am perfectly at home in the ancient history of my race, suppose I could talk like a professor about the changes of lower orders to higher orders, and were a master in all

studies pertaining to the genesis of life and its development—how much would it all amount to practically and as affecting my character and preparedness for something beyond? I cannot anchor myself to the *was*, if I would. The anchor will not hold. Every breeze of flying time, every pulse-beat, every tick of the clock is bearing me on into the *to be*. It is impossible to live in past moods and tenses. I must go on into the future, and I want to know where I am going. If I look ahead; if I peer into the beyond; if I try to see some headland breaking through the mist; if I take the great Pilot aboard—Him who trod the waves of Galilee—do not chide me, do not call me weak and foolish. The preface to the cradle may be all right as a study; and that study scientific men may give their days and their nights to. But I am old-fashioned enough to think that the appendix to the grave, the sequel to the sepulchre, is infinitely more important. Let others bore, and drill, and mine in the rear, if they will; let them get water out of rocks Silurian, and rocks Devonian, if they choose; but as for me, I want water out of the wells of salvation springing up into eternal life. I do not despise the nest in which I was hatched ages upon

ages ago ; but I do think a thousand times more of the wings which are bearing me to the cloudless and nightless land of immortality. I know I shall not end up with the animals, however far I may have come with them. I find myself under some strange attraction ; I find myself wooed upward by some mighty power ; I find myself as the shadows lengthen growing hungrier and hungrier for something earth and time cannot give ; I know it is the immortal in me reaching out—the caged bird beating against the prison bars. I want room, I want field ; the world is too small ; immortality alone can satisfy me.

Oh the great, the stupendous word, full of music, full of warning—I tell it out with gladness, and yet with fear and trembling—that for ever and for ever man shall live ! But where ? Where ? That question the Bible answers in terms which cannot be misunderstood ; and the Bible answer is my answer. Reason's lamp flings too short a beam here ; while it illumines a little space about the ship it leaves the shore we are tending to and the land whither we are going wrapped in gloom. It tells us, indeed, that we are immortal ; but it does not and cannot tell us what the conditions of life

everlasting are, or upon what they hinge. For that we must turn to the Bible ; and, turning to the Bible, it tells us that man, made in the image of God—man the sinner, man the fallen, man the deathless one—needs salvation. It tells us that that salvation, through the infinite grace of God, was provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It tells us that the Cross is our only hope ; and to the shelter of that Cross, to the refuge of the riven rock, to the protection of the heart that broke on Calvary, I invite every one of you this morning.

THE LAID-UP GOODNESS OF GOD

THE LAID-UP GOODNESS OF GOD

“ Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men ! ”—Psa. xxxi. 19.

HERE we have something worth thinking about, and which, if we consider it carefully, will surely stir our hearts with gratitude and fill our mouths with song. The laid-up goodness of God—all nature and all revelation and all providence are full of it. Much of it we have seen already, but the best is always to come. No amount of drawing upon God's bank can diminish the deposits which infinite love has made for our happiness. We see a few flowers, but what are they to the gardens that bloom and breathe their sweetness under every sky? We see a few streams, but what are they to the oceans that beat on every shore? A few stars, but what are they to the countless worlds that lie beyond our field of vision?

As the leaves which I look upon out of my window to all the waving forests of earth ;

as the lights of the city to the lights of the firmament; as the bread in the poor man's cupboard to all the overflowing granaries of earth, so is the manifest goodness of God to that which He has laid up in store. The corn in the sacks of the sons of Jacob was something, but compared with the corn in Egypt it was nothing at all. The Queen of Sheba thought she had seen some wealth and some magnificence, but when she beheld the treasures of Solomon her heart fainted within her; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. His riches are unsearchable, and His wisdom past finding out.

God is for ever surprising us with His reserves of goodness. Nothing has been more remarkable in all the unfoldings of history, and in all the development of civilisation, and nothing will be more wonderful in all the unfoldings of the future. Think for a moment of the laid-up goodness of God,

I. In nature. The coal that warms our homes and drives our engines and factories was stored away in the earth ages upon ages ago. God laid it up for the uses of His children thousands of years before they appeared upon the earth. So of the iron and copper and lead, so of the precious metals. They were all here when man came; and it is not too much to

say that they were prepared by processes of nature in anticipation of his advent. They have no meaning, and no reason for existence, so far as we can see, apart from the uses of man. Take radium, the newest and most marvellous of the metals that have come to our knowledge, and in all probability it is as old as the sun. Indeed, some scientific men describe it as "a bit of the sun imprisoned in the earth"; but whether it is that or not, for untold millions of years it has been a part of the laid-up goodness of God. Physicians everywhere are trying experiments with the mysterious matter, so far as they can get hold of it. One-tenth of a grain is supply enough for making tests, for the energy of radium is simply tremendous. The efficacy of it in the treatment of certain diseases is being proved more and more. Cancers and ulcers, incurable by any other remedies, have recently been healed by the application of radium. Some physicians believe that consumption can be cured by inhaling air that has passed over radium dissolved in water. It has been discovered that radium is death to all sorts of bacteria and microbes. While exceedingly rare, it has the property of making other substances radio-active, and so of multiplying its powers

almost indefinitely. What its possibilities are from the point of view of the healing art it would be presumption for me even to suggest; but with our present light we are justified in referring to it as a wonderful illustration of the laid-up goodness of God in nature.

From metals and minerals, pass to forces. This is what may be called the electric age, but the subtle agent which warrants the phrase has been in the world from the beginning. Earth and sea and air are full of it, and always have been, but not until less than a generation ago did man begin to make large drafts upon this stored-up goodness of God. We had the telegraph, to be sure, but beyond that little was known, and little use was made of electricity. To-day, however, we apply it in a thousand ways. It rings our bells, it lights our homes and our streets, it propels our cars, it does service in office and picture gallery, it is the motor power of factories, and is made to contribute to human comfort in I know not how many directions. But as yet we are only on the edges of it. The treasures of electricity have scarcely been touched upon up to date. It has more in store for man than has ever entered into his boldest dreams. These are only hints of the laid-up goodness

of God in the physical universe around us. Much has come to light; but far more is coming. Forces and resources as old as Time will yet be discovered and made to serve the uses of man. His mastery of nature will go on and on, and the achievements of the past in disclosing the secrets of the earth will be as nothing compared with the achievements of the future; and every step of advancement, every new invention, every additional discovery will but emphasise the laid-up goodness of God.

II. From nature turn to Providence. I am not talking to atheists, but to men and women who believe that God is in His world, and that all the movements of history and society are under His Divine superintendence. Things are not going on by chance, or turning out according to some grim and pitiless fate. Through all that is taking place, through all wars, and all accidents, and all calamities, and all tragedies and disasters one eternal purpose runs; all the various actors are playing out their part upon the stage according to a plan, and that plan is full of the laid-up goodness of God.

I know it is a hard book to read—this book of Providence. Its lessons are not so easily understood as the lessons of Nature. Their

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meaning is often hidden. It was no doubt with this in mind that Cowper wrote—

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.”

One reason, I suppose, why His providence is so difficult to interpret is because it is not, like creation, a finished work. It is still unfolding. New chapters are constantly being added. God knows what He is going to write. There is no confusion in His mind. From beginning to end it is all perfectly clear to Him. But it is not so to us. “Take a man,” as Dr. Guthrie says, “to a house when the architect is in the middle of his plans, and with walls half built and arches half sprung, rooms without doors, and pillars without capitals, what appears perfect order to the architect, who has the plan all in his eye, to the other will seem a scene of perfect confusion. And so stands man amid that vast scheme of providence which God began six thousand years ago and may not finish for as many thousand years to come.”

Let me illustrate by an instance or two. Stolen away from his father's side, cast into a pit, sold into slavery, carried into Egypt, and, though innocent of any crime, com-

mitted to a filthy dungeon, Joseph must have felt his lot a hard one indeed, and if he had cried out in rebellion it would not have been strange. We can sympathise with the old man Jacob when he exclaims, "All these things are against me." His heart was crushed and broken, and to Joseph, I am sure, the sorrow of it all must sometimes have been overwhelming. But by and by, when raised to the throne of Egypt, exalted to the premiership of a great empire, put in a position where he could lay up corn with which to save his own people from starvation, he could see, and his old father could see, at every turn of the road and in every crook in their lot the laid-up goodness of God.

Or look at the case of David. He was taken from the sheepfolds, where his young life was sunny and free from anxiety, and where the days were filled with brightness, to experiences of the most harrowing and cruel sort. He was envied, suspected, hated, hunted over the hills of Judah like a wild beast, and in daily peril of his life. Such was the road he had to travel to the throne which was really thrust upon him; and after he reached it the road was quite as thorny. But later on, with his kingdom established, with his character purified and enriched by

communion with Heaven, with his name and fame wrought into Israel's history for ever, with the whole providential sweep of his career lying before him, he could take his harp and sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

Now, we are not to think of these cases as exceptional. The laid-up goodness of God's providence was not more manifest in the lives of Joseph and David than some day it will be in ours. Some day we shall see that we never drank one bitter cup too much, that we never climbed one steep hill too many, that all our heartaches and disappointments, that all our sorrows and afflictions, had underlying them, as the very soil out of which they grew, the unchanging benevolence of our Heavenly Father. We shall see that the way that seemed right to us, and most desirable, was all wrong, a way of danger and destruction, and that if the gracious God had not turned us out of it with a stern hand, we would have gone on to inevitable ruin.

I love to think that as God's child I am in the good ship *Providence*, and that He who is at the wheel is master of every wind that blows and of every wave that dashes against the vessel; that all the veering and

tacking, all the rough tossing, all the discomforts of the voyage, all the storms and cloudy days, are as much a part of the great Captain's thoughtfulness and love as are the still sea and the sunny sky. It must be so if God is what this Bible represents Him to be. Nothing but good can come from the infinitely good.

Things which in themselves are evil God converts into instruments of beneficence. Out of the destructive storm comes the death of malaria and better health for the people. Out of pestilence comes a providential stimulus to sanitary progress which can be produced in no other way. Out of famine comes a development of philanthropy and Godlike sympathy that glorifies humanity. Out of heathen degradation comes the heroism of missions. Out of difficulty and conflict come such heroic virtues as fortitude, force of will, self-control, and unselfish generosity. Even out of the criminal blunders of men, resulting in accidents and such appalling loss of life that the whole world is shocked, come larger safety and greater care and more concern for human welfare. It was no reader of the surface, but the deep-seeing, profoundly thoughtful Paul, who said, "All things work together for good."

The whole sweep of history is an illustration of this truth. Down beneath all its wars, all its upheavals, all its agitations, all its revolutions, from the beginning until now has been the laid-up goodness of God. Dip into its annals where you please, study their outcome, note their effect upon mankind as a whole, and in every case you find them making large contributions to righteousness.

The French Revolution, terrific as it was, may be cited in proof. It was cruel, it was bloody, it was awful, and yet every student of that tremendous period knows how richly freighted it was with blessings for mankind. It was that Revolution, more than anything else, that made the literature and the liberty and the progress of all the subsequent years possible. In that unparalleled drama of fire and sword and guillotine the Past was brought to bay, and in the struggle exhaled all its miasmas, and hurled all its thunderbolts, and protruded all its horrible talons, only to exhaust itself and die at the hands of a Present that was wild with the enthusiasm of hope. That Present was big with Democracy, big with the rights of the people, big with the principles that are still lifting society and government to-day. So in our revolutionary war, in our stupendous civil

war, in the late war with Spain, it is not difficult to discern the laid-up goodness of God. Out through the sorrow and the heart-ache of camps and battle-fields, of deaths and agonies, there come a wider freedom, a nobler humanity, and a more beneficent civilisation.

We look out upon the Orient to-day, shaking beneath the tread of contending armies, with tens of thousands of men at grips with death, and the first impression is one of revulsion, one of horror, and especially if we are at all endowed with a realistic imagination. We see mighty battle-ships belching forth destruction, and the flash of cannon and the glare of rockets and search-lights painting hell on the sky. We see the hills about Port Arthur crowned with artillery and with every instrument of ruin and demolition that the diabolical science of modern warfare has devised. We see the long files of soldiers, the rush, the clash, the carnage, the awful slaughter of our brother men, and as we contemplate the fearful carnival of death and think back to its meaning for unnumbered far-away homes, we wonder where there can be any laid-up goodness of God in all that. If it is so awful to read about, so awful on the other side of the globe, what would it be if we could

see it out of our window? The horror of it would be dreadful beyond all telling; and yet, though we may not see it now, I am very sure that that great Eastern war will issue in immense blessings to mankind. It will arouse China from her age-long sleep. It will open that hoary empire to the trade of the world. It will shake down the idols of superstition and prepare the soil for the seed of the Gospel. In that war the Orient is in the travail pain of a new birth. Out of it all will come deliverance from thraldoms both civil and religious, that are hoary with the snows of countless years. When the smoke of battle has cleared away and the war-drum has been laid aside, the world will see how full of the laid-up goodness of God that famous struggle was.

III. From Providence let us pass to seek for further illustration in the realm of *grace*. This will take us to still higher ground, and give to our subject a still keener accent. It will bring us to the hill called Calvary, which in importance, in its infinite reach of meaning, overtops all the hills of earth and time. It is old, and the paths that lead up its slopes are well worn, and all its environment is familiar, but let us climb it once again, and from that summit and center of

grace survey, for a moment or two, the laid-up goodness of God.

There on that hill of love we learn from the Saviour Himself that the Crucifixion was simply the culmination of an ancient programme, the last act in a drama that was planned in the heart of God before ever the morning stars sang together. It was revealed to John on Patmos that Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and Peter declares that He was foreordained before the foundation of the world to be the Saviour of men. It is a wonderful thought to those who give it serious consideration.

There are people who think of the Cross as a kind of supplement or addendum, something erected on the field of history as an after-thought of the Divine mind. According to their way of looking at it, God had finished His great book and written *finis* on the last page, and then, after the lapse of a few thousand years, it occurred to Him to add another chapter, called the Cross. He saw the necessity for something heroic, and so enlarged His book by appending the incident of the crucifixion. The tragedy on Calvary came in as a kind of annex, and was no part of the architect's original plan.

But that view of the case belittles God

and brings Him within the limits of fallibility. If He could have any after-thoughts, or write any supplements, or make any amendments to any plans of His, or be forced to any change of programme, or any alteration of tactics, He would not be God. Such a God as that could not inspire our worship and would not be worthy of our adoration. He would be little better than the deities of ancient Greece and Rome. The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, saw the end from the beginning. With Him there is no time, no far-off future, no remote past, but one eternal Now. All that has ever occurred, and all that can ever take place, all facts, all events, are for ever present to the mind of God. The necessities of time-measurements, of yesterdays, to-days, and to-morrows, of years and centuries and millenniums, are the necessities of finite and imperfect beings. If this were always remembered it would clear up a good many hard questions of theology, such as predestination and foreordination.

We say the Cross was set up two thousand years ago, but that is only a small part of the truth—the truth as seen from the human side. The larger, the complete fact is, that the Cross is as old as the heart of infinite

Love. God being what He is, a sacrificial God, a giving God, the Cross is an essential attribute of His nature, and therefore came up out of eternity and manifested itself in time. Instead of being an after-thought, it belongs to the original constitution of things. Jesus brought it with Him, for He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; He took it with Him, for John saw in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain; and for ever and for ever that slain Lamb will be the leading strain in the music of the skies.

Well, now he must be blind indeed who cannot see the laid-up goodness of God in all this scheme of redeeming grace. It is wonderful, it is inspiring, and if we were as appreciative, as responsive, as we should be, it would thrill us to think that long before the dawn of creation, long before the stars began to sing and shine, all there is in the atonement, all there is in the salvation of the Cross, all there is of pardon and reconciliation, all there is of peace and hope and joy for the sinner in the blood of Christ, was laid up for us in the covenant of life. We were all of us in God's plan, in God's thought, and on God's heart, from the dateless beginning of the universe. Put

into the Cross all the meaning you choose and you will fall far short of what it contains of the laid-up goodness of God.

IV. It is time now to lead you a step higher. From grace let us turn to *glory*. The one is the introduction to the other. They are as inseparably related as the fountain and the stream, or as the vestibule and the auditorium, or as the door and the room into which it opens. We are told that in ancient Athens there were two temples—a temple of virtue and a temple of honour; and there was no going into the temple of honour but through the temple of virtue. So we enter the kingdom of glory only through the kingdom of grace. People who aspire after the one and neglect the other are doomed to crushing disappointment and despair. God hath joined them together, and no human wisdom or authority may presume to put them asunder. The way of grace is the way to glory, and there is no other way. Whoever, high or low, tastes of the laid-up goodness in glory must first of all taste of the laid-up goodness of grace.

But, assuming that we are children of grace, sinners saved by the Cross of Jesus, I want to say a final word about what is in store for us. It must be a trembling, frag-

mentary word at best, for it is a theme that might well tax an archangel's powers of speech. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." They are blessed beyond all description and beyond all imagination. I cannot go into details, I dare not, for the Bible gives me no warrant for that. But I think that I am perfectly justified in saying that the laid-up goodness of God in glory consists in large degree of the boundless provision He has made for the exercise and satisfaction of love. There is more in this than appears on the surface. We were surely made to love, and so capacious, so hungry, so all-devouring is love that there is not enough in all the relationships of earth to satisfy it. First the little child learns to love father and mother, then its love expands and takes in sisters and brothers, then it goes out to friends and neighbours; then to native land, and we call it patriotism; then to mankind, and we call it philanthropy. But it cannot be confined to these; it must sweep on and on until it finds a receptacle big enough to hold it and appease its hunger for ever.

Let me use an old illustration, but one always fresh and sweet. Here is a mother with half a dozen children. Does she split

up her love and give to each one of them a sixth of it, so that when it is thus parcelled out her love is exhausted? No, she loves each one with all her love, and has it all left for the good man whom she knew and loved before any of the six were born. But these family relations cannot absorb it. It overflows them all, surpasses them all, and longs for a heart into which it can pour its full flood throughout eternity. This it finds in the Lamb that was slain, in the God who became flesh and dwelt amongst us. It is sweet to love those who have been given to us in the tender relations of family life; but they die, and we cling to their memory with tears and our love is unsatisfied. We want something more. We must have something more. But God lives—God the good, God the holy, God glorious in His majesty, always offering Himself to the embrace of our love, our inheritance and our portion for ever. Through all eternity we shall explore Him, we shall be getting acquainted with Him, we shall revel in Him, we shall climb from height to height of His boundless nature, and be enraptured as we go deeper and deeper into His attributes and drink in more and more of His glory. To know God, to grow in knowledge of Him, this pre-eminently is the laid-up goodness that awaits all who love Him.

A RIGHT PUTTING OF EMPHASIS

A RIGHT PUTTING OF EMPHASIS

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”—MATT. vi. 33.

WHEN Jesus says to His disciples, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” He is urging a right putting of emphasis. As the great Teacher and Saviour of men He is supremely anxious that they shall make first things first. He drives straight at the centre and heart of things. The essential and not the accidental, the vital and not the formal, is what He demands. In the days of His flesh He found the scribes and Pharisees exceedingly scrupulous about trifles, while they were hopelessly dead to the weighty matters of true religion. Punctilious about little nothings, they had no eye and no heart for subjects of genuine magnitude. Some wretched shibboleth was more to them than mercy toward the fallen and help for the burdened. They carried their petty pro-

hibitions and injunctions to the extreme of ridiculous caricature. The needs of humanity and the claims of God were nothing in comparison with the importance of fastings and washings and the observance of senseless sectarian rules.

The mistake which they made is repeated by every generation. We are making it to-day, and there never was a yesterday when it was not conspicuous in the conduct of men. Out of this mistake, out of this blind and stupid and almost criminal blunder, have come all the wars and woes of humanity. We criticise, if we do not condemn, the cold and narrow moralism of the Pharisees, and we laugh at the folly of the old schoolmen who could—

“A hair divide
Between the west and north-west side,”

and who spent much time in learned speculations upon the number of angels that could dance on the point of a cambric needle; but we cannot afford to be too severe on them lest we pronounce sentence against ourselves. The play has changed, but not the fact. If the actors are new, the old drama is still on the stage. In the State, in the Church, in society, and in life, nothing has ever wrought more mischief in the past, and nothing in the

world at the present time is doing more to retard the progress of the kingdom, than laying the stress in the wrong place.

History is not so much a record of truth as of accent placed here or there by the bias and preference of its writers, or by their lack of ability to perceive its great underlying forces. You turn its pages, and if there is a Cæsar or a Genghis Khan, or a Napoleon, who has put his fellow-men to the sword and marked his path with rivers of human blood, he is written large; he fills all the foreground of the picture; but for the name of the man who invented the mariner's compass you will search in vain. A thousand are familiar with the wars that have devastated the earth where not one can tell us about the discovery of electricity which is to-day transforming the world. Gutenberg, who, by his invention of printing with movable types, has wrought greater revolutions and mightier emancipations than all the generals and captains that ever since his time set their armies in array, is far less known than Alexander, or Hannibal, or Cromwell, or Wellington.

About dynasties of kings and conquerors, about successions to thrones, about courts and palaces and politics, the historians write with wearisome detail, but how much have

they to say about the dynasties of genius out of which have come the real springs of civilisation? The succession of the Bourbons—every schoolboy is acquainted with that; but the vastly more important succession of Watt, Stephenson, Fulton, and Morse—the first of whom discovered the power of steam, the second of whom gave us the locomotive, the third the steamship, and the fourth telegraphy—how meagre the knowledge about that! Compare the space which Shakespeare fills in English history with that of Bloody Mary or the Stuarts, and it is like comparing a paragraph with a volume, or a word with a dictionary. The historians dismiss John Wycliffe with a page or two, they devote libraries to the Plantagenets. A line for John Milton and the curtain is rung down, while Charles I. is paraded upon the stage *ad nauseam*. Giants thrown into eclipse by dwarfs; mountains obscured by ant-hills; the sun dimmed by smoking candles, the real creators of English civilisation and greatness set aside to make room for royal nobodies and purpled ciphers.

✓ But that, very largely, is what we call history. Its writers have blindly and stubbornly persisted in making subordinate matters supreme, third or fourth things first,

and in putting the emphasis in the wrong place. They have punctuated their pages and filled their chapters, not with great principles, but with petty princes and scheming politicians; not with the Divine fire of genius, but with the fooleries of courts and cabinets. What is going on at the Vatican? At the Kremlin? At the Reichstag? At Constantinople? At Washington? That is the great question. As for the poets, the prophets, the philosophers, the inventors, the educators, the reformers, the thinkers, the scholars, from whose brains and hearts come the forces that build and save society, history can afford them but little space. What they are doing is not spectacular enough to put upon the stage. Humanity in every age must have something scenic, something exciting, something external and noisy, and so the emphasis is put there. It is not the still small voices that interest the people, but wind, earthquake, and fire; and what more natural than to accentuate that which is interesting?

If from history we pass to what is called the social problem we shall find the same mistake constantly on the surface. The social reformer is everywhere in evidence. He cries without. He utters his voice in the streets,

in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates. He is eager, aggressive, irrepressible. And he has his mission. For there are always evils to be denounced and wrongs to be righted. I believe in his cause, but I cannot endorse his methods. They can only hurt where he wants to heal. The trouble is not so much with his motive as with his remedy.

His programme is radically defective. There is no lack of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, but these he proposes to heal by external washings and cleansings and surface applications. He might as well try to sweeten and purify a stagnant and foul-smelling pond by pouring a few bottles of Apollinaris water into it. The ooze and slime and filth at the bottom of society are never touched by such a process. The foolish man is putting the emphasis in the wrong place. There is disease, there is pestilence in the house, and he would banish it by painting the outside walls. He is the kind of a doctor that would cure the victim of consumption by giving him a new suit of clothes. All his plans and pleadings and preachments stop with environment. Only let us have better homes for the people, better drainage, better laws, shorter hours of labour, more external

comforts, and the social millennium will be here. Nationalise the land, transfer all public utilities to the State, substitute a paternal collectivism for individual effort, lift the incompetent and the unskilful and the unworthy to the plane upon which the self-reliant and industrious and resourceful stand, and which they have reached by their own pluck and perseverance—only do these things, and the golden age of the social reformer will have come.

But a more absurd dream was never indulged. When you can build an ideal house out of decayed and worm-eaten material, or create ideal purity in a murky stream by planting flowers upon its banks, or produce ideal health in a diseased body by a little skin-washing, or an ideal scholar by surrounding a youth with books and schools—when you have wrought such impossibilities as these, you may hope to make an ideal society without ideal men, but not until then. Jesus never proceeded after the fashion of the social reformer. He addressed Himself to the interior currents of the soul, and made first things first. He saw that to redeem society from the gross and the animal and the selfish, or, in His own phrase, to bring in the kingdom of God, you must have kingly men, and hence

He devoted Himself to the innermost citadel and sought to get God into individual hearts. To talk about better environment, and better sanitation, and better education as the remedy for economic ills—to see nothing deeper than that programme—is a misplacement of emphasis which is doing infinite harm. It disturbs, it unsettles, it tears down, it lifts up axes and hammers upon the carved work, but there is nothing in it to reconstruct. Such a programme must end in ruin and not in restoration. The fundamental need of society is more manhood, more womanhood, better people, first the righteousness of God in individual hearts, and then the social conditions that are longed for, and hoped for, will materialise. If, instead of finding fault with the present order of things, agitators and malcontents did but devote their energies to making themselves better, the problem of a better society would soon be solved.

It will bring the matter closer and be more to the point, however, to consider the bearings of our subject in the realm of religion. Nowhere is a wrong putting of emphasis more conspicuous or more mischievous than here. The history of it is not inspiring, and as we look out upon its work to-day in Bibli-

cal interpretation, in religious literature, in Christian activity, and among the Churches, it is not calculated to stir our enthusiasm.

I call your attention to a few illustrations, beginning with the *doctrine of Creation*. With the heated controversies and word-battles that have raged over this subject, and the endless pamphleteering that has been indulged in, all intelligent people are familiar. Some have laid the stress on the time element. They have quoted the Catechism and the Bible, and insisted that "in six days God created the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is"—six literal days of twenty-four hours each. Not to believe that was considered a dangerous heresy a few years ago.

Then the *method* of creation has been discussed and fought over with even greater earnestness and determination. On the one side were those who contended for creation by *fiat*; on the other, for creation by *process*. This school affirmed that creation came in a flash by the word of Almighty power; that school declared that it came through countless ages by the inworking of Divine energy. So the fight has gone on, and it still goes on. But in the persistent wrangle and debate the matter of supreme importance, the imma-

ment, the eternal, the creating God, has been kept too much in the background. The parties to the controversy have failed to see that the main thing is not that the heavens and earth were created in six literal days or in countless millions of ages, not that the universe came by fiat or by process, but that it came—came by the power of God; that God was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. If the one supreme, all-absorbing, all-controlling thought had been God, not a little lake God, or class God, or provincial God, but a God oceanic, with all the currents of creation in His heart, all these smaller issues would have been avoided, and thinkers of all schools would have bowed in adoration and prayer.

Passing to the fall of man, we find the same thing—the emphasis put too much upon the mere drapery of the truth, rather than upon the truth itself. The author of Genesis tells us that the serpent spoke to the woman, beguiled her, tempted her, and persuaded her to eat the forbidden fruit. She yielded, “and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.” Then follows the account of their awakened and piercing sense of shame. What vain and empty wrangling and hair-splitting there has been over it all! How

could a serpent talk, and what harm could there be in eating an apple, and what theological paper-houses have been built up out of that fig-leaf business!

It is pitiful to note how the commentators dwell upon these trifles and amplify their discussion of them into scores of dreary pages, while the innermost substance of it all is too often passed over very lightly. Leaving the serpent and the woman, and the apple and the fig-leaf entirely to one side, evidently something has gone wrong with our world. Distrust is here, dishonesty is here, hatred is here, a thousand black passions burn in human hearts and flame in human society. Selfishness shows its ugly features wherever men and women congregate. Cruelty cuts and grinds and kills. The fire and smoke of war paint hell on the sky and produce hell on the earth. Falsehood paints and veneers and deceives from the Cabinet to the cabin. Impurity stains and soils and slimes. All these things we add together and call them sin. Sin is here—the one black and awful fact of the universe; and somewhere, some time, somehow it had a beginning, and that beginning is what is meant by the Fall.

There is nothing to laugh at in the Edenic story, nothing to quibble about, or make light

of, if we are serious and thoughtful enough to penetrate through the literary form to the tremendously significant fact that lies at the heart of it. Nothing is more certain than that the poison of sin got into the fountain-head of humanity's great stream. We are so full of it, every one of us, that ordinarily it doesn't take much of a scratch to reveal the wolf. The serpent and the apple and the garden are only the small framework of the picture; and what shall we say of those who are more concerned about the framework than about that which it encloses? We shall have to say of them that they are stupidly committing the age-long blunder of putting the emphasis in the wrong place.

What we need in Biblical interpretation is to seize upon the underlying, essential truth, and lay the stress there. If we do not, we shall justly expose ourselves to the ridicule and scorn of the infidel, to the contempt of the scholar, to the distrust of people of hard common sense, and make ourselves unhappy as, year after year, we see our positions and arguments turned upside-down. Instead of stopping to botanise over a few unimportant weeds along the mountain-slope, let us make sure of the trend of the great range itself and follow that. Instead of

dissecting and analysing the cart which the baker drives up to our door, let us put ourselves in possession of the bread.

When, for example, the Bible tells us that God came into the garden in the cool of the day and Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves among the trees, I know that that is true, and so do you, because we know ourselves. It is not a question of trees and gardens, but of experience. Innocence stays in the light; guilt always flies to cover. Innocence never hides; guilt never courts the open. The very moment a man does wrong he begins to look around for the trees of the garden.

Commit iniquity and your first impulse is one of concealment. Sin makes fools and cowards of us all, just as it did of Adam and Eve. This whole story of Eden is as true as the principles of geometry, if we pierce the shell of it and get to that which lies beneath.

Out of a wrong putting of emphasis has come the sectarianism which is to-day the greatest obstacle to the progress of the kingdom. Men seize upon some little phase or are of truth and magnify it away until the mighty sweep and significance of the great circle is thrown into eclipse. There are people, and God forbid that I should criticise them, who for their earnestness, their conse-

eration, their integrity of life, are entitled to profound respect and admiration. I refer to them only by way of illustration. In their zeal for the external, physical, second coming of our Lord they seem to overlook the far more practical and mighty truth that Christ is here now, that He is a present and not an absent Christ; that this growing sense of justice that cries out against wrong; this growing sense of humanity that cries out against war; this increasing sense of brotherhood that calls for peace conferences and friendly arbitration; this earnest study of social conditions; this rapid development of a social conscience that is everywhere calling for the right thing, the fair and honest thing—in all this they fail to see that Christ is already in His world and His truth is marching on.

But they are not alone in this misplacement of emphasis. The denominations are all guilty. For generations they have laid the stress upon the little things in which they differ rather than upon the great fundamentals in which they are agreed. The mischief of it will never be fully told. We are glad to note a drawing together, but even yet there is plenty to give point to what I am now saying. One body of Christians is

made exclusive and unneighbourly by emphasising Apostolic Succession. Its pulpits are not open to those who love the same Christ and preach the same Gospel. Another builds a wall around the communion-table against all who were not baptized by immersion. Another makes the singing of psalms a sufficient point of difference to justify a separate denomination. Another makes its chief rallying cry the Seventh Day as the unchanging and unchangeable Sabbath.' And so on and through all our 169 Christian sects.

Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, instead of making their supreme concern the conversion of men and the promotion of the religion of the Cross, is it unkind or extravagant to say, in view of these needless and unchristian divisions, that their chief anxiety seems to be to maintain and advance their distinctive doctrines and politics and sectarian faiths? When we see a small town of 2,500 inhabitants, with five or six different evangelical Churches, every one of which is poor and weak and inefficient, it is impossible not to raise the question as to their inherent and fundamental honesty. Is it zeal for Christ, or zeal for something else of infinitely less importance,

that causes such a waste of energy and a waste of money and a scattering of forces? And the conditions in this small town are duplicated in 10,000 other towns throughout the country. Ministers starving, Churches starving, too feeble to make any impression upon the people, nothing attractive either in their preaching or their services, when, if they were wise enough, and heroic enough, and unselfish enough to unite their resources, they might have one central place of worship and of Christian activity that would be a real power in the community.

But they stand apart, jealous of each other, full of small rivalries and unseemly competitions, driven to all sorts of unworthy make-shifts to keep their heads above water because they are putting the emphasis in the wrong place. Denominational shibboleths are made more of than the Saviour of men. Calvinism, Arminianism, Lutheranism—human names are lifted above the name of Christ. The main question with them is not how to save sinners, but how to save the sects. If any one is inclined to think that this is too strong, let him look through our Western towns, let him consider the existence of our 169 denominations in this country, and he will conclude that I am putting it much too

mildly. Thank God for the signs on the horizon that a better day is dawning. Men are beginning to think and to open their eyes. They are beginning to see the folly and the sin of our sectarian divisions. The conviction is growing upon them that it is poor economics and worse religion for Christian organisations, with professedly common aims and common fundamental beliefs and a common Lord and a common hope, to stand apart on trifles. They are coming to believe that small disagreements and non-essentials should be entombed and forgotten in the larger interests of the Church universal. They are slowly but surely coming to believe that in Christian charity, in Christian zeal, in affectionate brotherly co-operation, all who love our Lord Jesus Christ should unite about the Cross for the conquest of the world.

Not the least significant of these auspicious signs is the increasing demand for evangelism. The call for it is becoming pathetic. It is felt by multiplying thousands that we must have the old evangel of the Cross everywhere in the front or yield the fight. If men are not sinners, supremely in need of salvation, Christianity has no mission in the world. The drift back to evangelism is a drift toward a right putting of emphasis.

There can be no evangelism that does not lift up Christ, and when Christ is really lifted up all lesser lights must pale like stars before the rising of the sun. It is well enough as a matter of history to make much of Calvin and Luther and Wesley, but sinners are never saved until human names fall away into eclipse, and no man is seen save Jesus only. Emphasise Him, exalt Him, keep Him in the fore-front, as all true evangelism must; be anxious most of all to brush away the moss and the rubbish from the Rock, and plead with the sinner to plant his feet there—that Rock is Christ, and other foundation can no man lay—put the stress upon that, and we shall have evangelism of the Pentecostal sort, the Pauline sort, and it is impossible to have evangelism of that kind without bringing the Churches together.

Our subject has a very direct relation to life. I believe in right thinking. I believe in doctrine and in the great truths that centre in the Cross. So do you. We have a well-defined faith and we are not ashamed of it. The foundations upon which it rests are sure.

“On Christ the solid rock we stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

That is our creed. But with our feet on

that platform we are bound to say, in fidelity to the lessons of this hour, that unspeakable harm has been done in the Church and by the Church by an over-emphasis of orthodoxy and an under-emphasis of life; by laying the stress upon the soundness of a man's creed rather than upon the nobleness of his character. To be theologically straight and correct has been too often accounted of greater value than to be morally pure and upright. The man who has subscribed to certain human statements of truth, no matter how cold, no matter though he carried December in his heart all the year round, stiff, unsympathetic, chilling, and cutting like a wind out of the north, has been kept in the Church and clothed with ecclesiastical honours; while the sunny man whose presence was summer, whose heart overflowed with goodness and love, whose hands scattered blessings wherever he went, has been read out because he was considered heretical on certain points of doctrine. Instances of what I am now saying will readily occur to you, for I am not speaking of something that took place in the Middle Ages, but of something that is still too much in evidence.

Now, I submit that the spirit of a man

should be considered, and if that is good, if it is unselfish and Christlike, it should outweigh everything else, and the emphasis should be put there. Practice before profession, service before subscription, doing Christian deeds, manifesting a Christian temper, living the Christian life rather than wearing the Christian livery, the Kingship of God in the soul, the righteousness of God in our plans and purposes and programmes—in one word, first things first, then, and then only, may we expect the “Well done” of the Master.

THE KINGDOM

THE KINGDOM

“Thy kingdom come.”—MATT. vi. 10.

LAST Sunday morning I spoke to you upon the Church. This morning I ask you to think with me for a little while about the kingdom. If the sermon should prove uninteresting the subject itself is so massive, so profound, there is in it so much of the boom and swing of the ages and of the eternities, that it will certainly afford the serious and earnest-minded enough to think about. In our homes and in our Churches no sentence is more familiar or more frequently on our lips than “Thy kingdom come.” Perhaps this very fact keeps us from reflecting upon its meaning as much as we should. A phrase may become so common as to lose all its significance. By frequent repetition the sense gets beaten out of it and only sound is left. For this reason it is not easy to deal with such a theme as I have chosen for this hour. There

is no freshness, no novelty, nothing to arouse and startle. Nevertheless I make the venture; and in doing so I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I am following a most illustrious example, for Jesus was constantly talking about the kingdom and setting it forth in parables that will never die.

I. First of all let us inquire what this kingdom is for whose coming we are taught to pray. We believe that in nature, that in the whole universe of matter, through all creation's wide domain, the kingdom of God has come. Every mote, every insect, every river, every planet, all that belongs to the physical in this and every other world, is under the sovereignty of Jehovah. The whole cosmos yields to His sceptre. Not a star, not an ocean, not a movement of the tides, not a life however great or small, can get away from the power of His throne. It is this and this only that makes the universe safe and orderly. In like manner all the unfoldings of history, all movements of nations and of society are subject to His rule, yesterday, to-day, and always. Nothing happens. Chance is the emptiest word in human speech. Whatever comes to pass in the Orient, whether there is to be war or peace, whether there is to be a tremendous

upheaval, or things are to continue as they are, one thing is certain, God's hand will be in it all and over it all. The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. In creation and providence His kingdom is as much here as it ever can be, so that to pray for its coming would be superfluous.

Our text has to do with another realm altogether. It refers to the kingdom of *Grace*, and that has to do with conduct, with the subordination of human wills to the Divine will, with the glad acceptance of the rulership of Christ over individual lives. It is a spiritual kingdom, of which the Son of God is King. This kingdom is not yet come, but it is coming. It is gradually pervading and interpenetrating all other kingdoms ; and the grandest hour in the history of the universe will be the hour when it has fully come and its triumphs are complete. Eternity will be spent in celebrating it and praising God for it. At this consummation of the ages, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever, all heaven will break forth into song. If you and I are there to participate in the glorious jubilee the one thing that will inspire our gladness will be the recollection that we had

something to do with extending the sway of Christ's empire. Our material victories, our successes in the world of trade, our financial accumulations, our worldly ambitions and triumphs will cut no figure there. All our recognition, all our satisfaction, all our joy will come from the fact that we did something to hasten the coming of the kingdom. When we pray "Thy kingdom come" we are asking Jesus Christ to rule us, to rule society, to rule business, to rule everywhere.

II. Now let us consider what that would mean. Extend the reign of Christ to China and Japan and India and Africa, make Him King from the rising to the setting of the sun, and every pagan idol would come down, every degrading superstition would die, all caste, all cruel class distinctions, all wars, all tyrannies and oppressions, all brooding, blighting iniquities would fade away. Extend the reign of Christ into the industrial world, and the conflict between capital and labour would cease. The reason why the gulf widens and the antagonism becomes more and more pronounced every year is because on both sides of the controversy selfishness sits enthroned. Here Greed is king, there Pride, both of them children of the devil; and there will be no peace between them; strikes and

upheavals and outbreaks will go on until both abdicate and Jesus is crowned instead.

Nothing has done more harm in human society, nothing is doing more mischief to-day, than the baleful doctrine of human rights. The whole tendency of it is to socialism, anarchism, pandemonium, and the bottomless pit, and that for the reason that it is fundamentally selfish. "Our rights!" cried the frenzied populace of France a hundred and ten years ago, and the monarchy was overthrown, religion was turned out, harlotry was exalted, abominations of all sorts ran riot, chaos swept up and down the streets of her cities, the guillotine chopped off heads, and the horrors of the French Revolution staggered the world.

"Our rights" is the plea of the liquor traffic as it goes on with its work of death; of capitalism as it crushes small dealers under its merciless wheels and pushes the working man down and down into hopeless poverty; of the labour organisation as it closes the doors of opportunity against the non-union man and cruelly drives him and his family to starvation. "Our rights" is the slogan of all wars, the plea of all grinding competitions, the cry of all unholy rivalries and conflicts among men. Behind it people

excuse their crimes and their indifference. They say, "Haven't we a right to go to church or stay at home? Haven't we a right to vote or refrain from voting, to drink or abstain, to turn the Sabbath into a day of pleasuring or of piety, to endorse or condemn, to sell or not to sell just as we please?"

That is the spirit that causes all our trouble. It stands at the opposite pole from all that is taught in the Word of God. The word "rights" is nowhere to be found in the Bible. In its essence it is atheistic. The doctrine that goes booming through the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine that develops the heroes and reformers of the inspired book, the doctrine that binds all noble hearts and lives to the throne of Christ, is the sublime doctrine of human duties. "I am debtor" is the verbal form it takes. It looks out and not in, away from the egoistic to the altruistic, and considers what it can do for others. "I am debtor." That is the creed that makes Pauls and Savonarolas and Judsons and Livingstones, that gives to the world your Lord Shaftesburys and Florence Nightingales and Maud Ballington Booths. It is the salt of society, the one thing that saves it from putrescence and decay. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ;

and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give Himself a ransom for many." So Jesus puts it, and you find no suggestion of rights there. Duty, service, doing something for other people—all that is opposed to selfishness, that is the teaching of Christianity, and that sort of conduct always shows itself where Christ is made King.

All this and much more is what the coming of the kingdom would mean, because its law is duty and its principle is love. When it comes in its fulness it will be a universal brotherhood all owning the sway of King Jesus. The appeal of this kingdom is not to the rights of the weak, but to the Christian manhood and love of the strong. It makes no plea on the basis of equality, for there is no such thing among men. Assertions that all men are equal, the same in weight and worth and quality, are mere rhetoric and bunkum, no matter in what dignified or venerated document they appear. In thought capacity, in moral capacity, in possibilities of development the differences are immense. Brothers in the human family are never equal, never will or can be, but if they are brothers they will sympathise with one

another and love one another and help one another. Behind all earthly conditions and accidents they will recognise their essential and eternal brotherhood and act as brothers must. No ignorance, no vice, no class, no colour will stand a man off at arm's length, or push him to the wall, or exclude him from our loving interest and our tender compassion if he is our brother. The coming of the kingdom means that in all social relations the welfare of one is the welfare of all, the anguish of one the sorrow of all. And this condition of things will be reached when men everywhere submit to the loving reign of Christ and devote themselves to the performance of duties instead of the vindication of rights. Then the strong will bear the burden of the weak, the wise will think for the unwise, and men will find their happiness where God finds it and heaven finds it, in the service of others.

III. Here, perhaps, it may be well to note a little more particularly the location of this kingdom for whose coming we are taught to pray. Just where is its sway to be exercised? There are people who imagine that these conditions at which I have hinted can only be realised in heaven. The ideal seems to them altogether too high for this world. But

here is the petition: "Thy will be done in earth even as it is done in heaven." Earth is the place for the coming of the kingdom, earth is the sphere where God's programme is to be carried out, right here and now, in our trade, in our banks, in our schools, in our politics, in our mines, and in all the activities of this present world.

Perhaps no greater delusion ever took possession of the human mind than the thought that doing the will of God is a standard unattainable by men in this strenuous life of ours. Even Christian people find it necessary to explain away much of the plain teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and of the Gospel in general. Back in the early centuries it was assumed that the reign of Christ in the individual life was possible only in a monastery; and when it was found that there were too many temptations there resort was had to the loneliness of the hermit's cell.*

Then the reformers came, and, seeing that the ideal Christian life could not be lived in cells and monasteries and nunneries, they swung to the other extreme and concluded that the will of God could only be done beyond the stars. Catholicism said: "If you

* See "Ethical Christianity," by Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, A.M., pp. 25-27.

want to be perfect go to the cloister." Protestantism said: "If you want to be perfect you must wait till you get to Paradise." Thus both alike taught practically that the kingdom of God is too Divine, too ethereal, too far beyond the reach of men ever to come on this planet. The full fruitage of Christianity is not to be looked for in the ordinary relations of our present social life; for that we must wait until we pass on to Canaan. And yet, strangely enough, all through the centuries both Catholics and Protestants alike have been praying: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in *earth* even as it is done in heaven."

Now, as a matter of fact, our Lord's prayer makes no request whatever about heaven. In it He taught His disciples, and He teaches us to concentrate all our thoughts and all our desires and all our requests upon the duties and privileges of this present life, and upon the necessity of doing the will of our Father, here and now. And if you will turn to the book of Revelation and read the last two chapters carefully, in which the City of God is described, you will find that it is located, not in the celestial regions, but on the earth. John is setting forth, not something that will take place on the other side of the last river, but something that will be realised in this

present world—what Denver will be, and Chicago, and New York, and every other city will be, when their citizens acknowledge the kingship of Jesus and enthrone Him in their lives. “And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. . . . And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” The whole entrancing picture belongs to earth and not to heaven.

But we have a very comfortable way of toning down the Scriptures, and excusing ourselves, and postponing the lives we ought to be living now to some future state. It is wrong, and God will not hold us guiltless. “Thy kingdom come.” That is for to-day, for the prosy life we now live in the flesh, for the individual, for society, for the world. It is, therefore, supremely practical. Men sometimes go away from church complaining that there was nothing in the sermon that touched their lives. It seemed to them to deal with things remote—things beyond the

range of human experience. But that complaint will not hold this morning. "Thy kingdom come." Do you mean it? Are you really anxious that Christ should rule you and shape your conduct and subdue you unto Himself? If so, you will put away dishonesty, covetousness, pride, indolence, and all the devil's brood of sin. If so, you will put away lying, and deceitfulness, and hypocrisy, and malice, and evil-speaking. If so, you will put away indifference to the Cross, disregard for prayer, and all unconcern about the kingdom's interests at home and abroad.

Practical! I should say so. If you meant it this morning when you prayed "Thy kingdom come," it would affect you, and transform you to the very roots of your life. The family altar would go up again. Religion would be the dominating thing in you. The enterprises of the Church would enlist your thought and sympathy and co-operation as no others under the sun. Missions would cease to be a bore, and you would say, "How glad I am to hear that pagans in all the dark corners of the earth are bringing their crowns and putting them on the brow of my Jesus, and missionary literature would have a place on every one of our tables and be eagerly read. You would really be in love with Him, and all sham devotion, and all formal service,

and all make-believe worship would give place to warmth, and sincerity, and earnestness.

If we meant it when we pray "Thy kingdom come," it would no longer be necessary to plead with our people to attend meetings, to keep the Cross in the front, to give Christianity the inside track, to make first things first, and relegate all parties, and dinners, and feastings, and gods of the flesh to the rear. Such talk would be superfluous, a waste of breath, if Jesus were King. With Him on the throne of our hearts spiritual things would be a passion with us, a delight so absorbing that we should have no taste, no desire for anything else. If we meant it when we say "Thy kingdom come," every one of us would be a missionary, the whole Church would be ablaze with evangelism, and we would never rest until the King's sway was acknowledged from pole to pole.

Our subject, therefore, is so practical that it bears in every direction. It touches the State as well as the individual. If we ask why divorces multiply, why the home is imperilled, why Mormonism is permitted to cast its filthy shadow across the United States Senate, why crimes increase, why public education is becoming secularised; if we ask why all this social upheaval, all this labour disturbance, all this muttering of subterranean

forces, all this antagonism of class to class, which may end in a grapple that will shake society to its foundations; if we ask why there is such a tremendous disparity between the machinery and organisation and expenditures of the Church on the one hand and the results achieved on the other, I answer, the explanation of it all is found in a lack of allegiance to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In the name, therefore, of all our dearest interests for time and eternity; in the name of our homes and of our cities; in the name of our children and of their inheritance of all the good things of a civilisation irradiated by Christianity; in the name of the Christian Church, which means so much for mankind; in the name of our own immortal souls and their salvation; in the name of Calvary and of Him who died there—I charge you, and I charge my countrymen of all classes and callings and conditions, doing homage to wealth, doing homage to power, doing homage to the gods of this world—I charge them to remember that there is another King, one Jesus, and that the glory of the Church and the safety of society and the stability of the State can only be secured by loyalty to Him, by obedience to His law, and by the coming of His kingdom.

A DAY OF GOOD TIDINGS

A DAY OF GOOD TIDINGS

MISSIONARY SERMON.

“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”—2 KINGS vii. 9.

THE city of Samaria was besieged by the great army of Sennacherib. The beleaguered inhabitants were starving. Hungry-eyed famine walked up and down the streets. To such straits were the people driven that an ass’s head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and they were compelled to feed on refuse and garbage. But one night, when they were in this dreadful plight, the besieging army suddenly withdrew.

Just outside of the city gates were four lepers who were ignorant of what had taken place, and, in sheer desperation, they resolved to visit the camp of the besieging army. They reasoned in this way, “Why sit we here until

we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come; let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." So in the early morning twilight they stole out to the camp of the Syrians, and to their astonishment they found that the invading host had fled in a panic, leaving countless stores of all kinds behind. The starving lepers fell to feasting upon the good things, eating and drinking with infinite relish. When their hunger was appeased, they began to loot the forsaken tents and to gather the silver and gold that had been left. They fairly revelled in the spoils. But after awhile conscience began to upbraid them. In their plenty and fulness they had forgotten the starving, perishing population of the city; and now at last, bethinking themselves, "They said one to another, We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us; now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household."

One doesn't need to be much of a preacher to turn such a story as this to practical

account; it speaks for itself. May not the Christian people of this favoured land and of this congregation say—

I. *This is a day of good things?* For us the beleaguering armies of superstition and ignorance and moral blindness are gone. They no longer compass us about, and keep our higher nature in hunger and famine and despair. Thanks to our conquering Christ and His faithful servants, they have been put to rout. We live in the light, and enjoy privileges of education, privileges of spiritual improvement, privileges of character, nurture, and culture, such as were vouchsafed to no former generation and to no other people. For us the feast and the banqueting-table and unlimited abundance. For us soul wealth now, and blessedness now, and rapturous communings now, and many an inspiring look into the unseen; and for us hope, for us a great world of anticipated delights along the pathway of the future. For us participation in the love of God and the service of God, and in the rewards of noble work nobly done. For us the companionship of Jesus and the sweet faith and the gracious promises and the never-failing sympathy and help of the Son of God.

Then on the lower side, on the material side, how richly we are provided for! For us how

sumptuous have been our Christmas feasting — backs elegantly apparelled, tables laden with toothsome viands of all sorts, homes comfortably and, in many cases, luxuriously appointed, and gifts innumerable to make us happy. Surely it is a day of good things. The text certainly gives us a very accurate description of the times in which we live.

II. But let us not overlook the reproof of *indifference* which it contains. “We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” The world is full of the spiritually destitute. Hundreds of millions have never heard of the wonderful provisions of the Gospel to which we are indebted for all our light and all our abundance to-day. We are told that one commendable trait of the Anglo-Saxon is his love of fair play, and as those who like to be classed under this head, let us ask, Is it fair to hold our peace? Is it fair to keep our Gospel and our Gospel blessings to ourselves? Is it fair for the people in this splendid Christian ship, which rides the waves and overcomes the storms, because God in His mercy has given it the true chart of the sea, and put the great Pilot on board, to let the people in that other heathen ship perish on the rocks without even sending them a life-boat or doing anything for their rescue?

Indifference, inhumanity of that sort is enough to stir the blood of every great-souled man who knows anything of our history. If you have ever read back along the line of your own pedigree, you are aware to-day that your ancestors were steeped in paganism. They believed in human sacrifices. Some of them, no doubt, smacked their lips over a meal of human flesh. When they wanted to know what would be the issue of a battle there in the forests of Britain and Germany, they would take fair young girls, put them in crates made of small twigs, then stand off and shoot arrows into them, and according as the blood flowed this way or that way they judged that the fight would be propitious or unpropitious. In their great oak groves they performed rites and indulged in cruelties that are awful to think of—those forefathers of yours and mine.

And who was it that opened their eyes and taught them better? Who was it but Augustine, and Paulinus, and Patrick, and Colomba—humble, fearless, self-sacrificing foreign missionaries? Who has not read in his History of England about what took place in a certain banqueting-hall? A great company of nobles had assembled, and a stranger sent in word that he would like to speak to them. His

name was Paulinus, or little Paul, and they asked, "Shall he speak?" Then an old man rose and said, "What is this life we are living? Where did we come from? Where are we going? We do not know. It is as though a sparrow should fly into this hall out of the night and the cold, circle around for a moment, and fly out again. That is our life; we do not know where we came from. We stay here for a little while, and then out into the dark we go. If this stranger can tell us anything let him be heard." So Paulinus, the missionary, was admitted, and told them about Christ and about the meaning He put into life, and how He dispelled the shadows that gathered about it, and many of them were converted.

Or who has not read of that noble deed that was done in the forests of Western Germany far away yonder in the early centuries? There was a giant oak, dedicated to Thor, the god of thunder, and around it the wild barbarians used to gather to engage in their rude and superstitious and degrading rites. But one day Boniface, full of the zeal of the Cross, appeared upon the scene, and with his axe began to cut down the sacred tree. The pagan multitudes were amazed at his boldness and courage. The fact that Thor did

not strike him dead they took as a sign that he was right and they were wrong, and so they turned to the living and true God.

That is where our Christianity came from—from the heroic work of Augustine and Paulinus in England, of Colomba in Scotland, of Patrick in Ireland, and of Boniface in Germany. The converts of foreign missionaries were our ancestors, and a spirit of fairness means that I must do for others as men once did for me. The starving people of Samaria had just as holy a claim upon the stores of food left by Sennacherib's fleeing army as the four lepers had; and before God the soul-famishing millions of Africa and Asia and the islands of the sea have a right to the Gospel and to all that is best in life quite as sacred as our own. All that Jesus Christ has been to us and to our country and to our forefathers He can be to every other country, and to the benighted sons of men everywhere. As He lifted us out of degradation and moral blindness back yonder in our pagan progenitors, so He can lift all other degraded men. The remedy which proved so efficacious for the Anglo-Saxon will prove equally efficacious for Mongolian and Hottentot and Malay, and if we are not willing and glad to send that remedy, let us not talk about being followers of Jesus.

If I have in my home a specific that has saved my children from the plague, what kind of a man am I if I withhold it from my neighbour's children in the valley of the Congo or the Nile or the Yukon, who are dying of the same disease? What saved my children will save his, and yet I hold my peace. Is that the fairness of brotherly love? But perhaps you are saying, "My neighbour is the man across the street, or the man in the lower part of my own city." Not necessarily. You have read the Gospel very superficially if that is your conclusion. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus taught that your nearest neighbour is your *neediest* neighbour, though he live by the shores of the Yellow Sea. No doubt there are needy people at home, but every well-informed person knows that the needs in China, and in Judea, and in South America are beyond comparison greater than even in the slummiest and most God-forsaken parts of our own land.

I do not believe in the socialistic theory of division. I do not believe in a community of goods. I do not believe in the principle of sharing along material lines. In all such matters I believe that they should have who earn. But when it comes to the Gospel, woe be to us if we do not divide. What Jesus

Christ divided with me, I am bound to divide with every other man. If He has given me salvation, I am under the most solemn obligation to pass that salvation on. If I love Jesus Christ, if my heart beats in loyalty to Him, His horizon will be my horizon, His thought my thought, His programme my programme. And what is His horizon? "All nations." What is His thought? Love for all men. What is His programme? "Ye shall be My witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth." He didn't say, "Ye are the light of your own home, or your own town," but "Ye are the light of the world." He didn't say, "Ye are the salt of your own Church," but "Ye are the salt of the earth." Oh, if we did but enter into the swing and sweep and bigness of the thoughts of Jesus, it would be superfluous to preach on this subject!

When you say you believe in Jesus, and yet do not believe in foreign missions, then I say you are putting two impossible things together. They won't mix. The love of Christ in the heart will go as far as Christ's love goes. The boundary of this will be the boundary of that. Let us not deceive ourselves. Love and disloyalty cannot walk the same road. We cannot be disobedient and faithful at the same time, and when Jesus says, "Go ye into

all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," we cannot love Him and be loyal to Him if we refuse. We cannot be faithful if we disobey. Oh, men and women, if our love for Christ cannot fly across the ocean it certainly has a broken wing; if it cannot fly beyond our own town, or beyond a little spasmodic benevolence under our own windows, it has two broken wings, and is a poor crippled, dirt-scratching, barnyard fowl that can only do a little picking and clucking for its own chickens!

The lepers said, "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us." They felt that if they held their peace and kept their stores of food and treasures of silver and gold to themselves some punishment would surely overtake them. The feeling was true to the inmost reality of things. No man, no Church can escape the withering, shrivelling blight of selfishness. It dries and dwarfs and dwindles. Let there be no outlet and you have a Dead Sea, and where there is no benevolence you have a dead life and a dead Church. No Church ever remains in debt very long that is characterised by a decided missionary spirit. I make that statement without the slightest qualification. The Church roll of every

Christian denomination in America will bear it out. The Church that will not give to others will not give to itself.

There never is, there never can be any genuine enthusiasm in a Church which is not altruistic—an enthusiasm for others. It was this that carried the Gospel from Jerusalem to Britain in the early centuries; this that produced the great world-shaking revivals whose waves of power are still rolling across the earth. It was not men in embroidered slippers, or in Sunday morning dressing-gowns, or men like petrified wood, that will neither burn, nor melt, nor bear fruit, that won the victories of the Cross in the ages gone; but men on fire for the extension of the kingdom and the salvation of souls and the glory of God. They were not men of secularised but men of spiritualised temper, with eyes to see and hearts to feel the needs of the world.

When a country comes to the point where it loses enthusiasm for liberty, when its principles no longer inspire its citizens, and they are content to stock their armies with hirelings and do their fighting by mercenaries, that country is decadent, its liberties are gone, it has nothing left worth dying for. I wish we could see that when a Church

reaches a stage where the missionary spirit is gone, she has reached a stage when, by her own confession, she has nothing worth propagating. I wish we could see that the Church that flings its beams farthest into the night is the Church that shines the brightest around its own doors. I wish we could see that the reflex influence of missions is the very salvation of the Church local and the Church universal. The most missionary of all the Churches to-day is the Moravian, and what is the result?—a perpetual revival at home.

“Go ye into all the world, and, lo, I am with you.” God is not with us, because we do not go. Christ is not walking among the golden candlesticks, because they are canopied over and walled about with selfishness. Lift the canopy, break down the walls, let the light fly out, and Christ will be with us in mighty saving power. But if we tarry till the morning light, if we are indifferent and negligent, some mischief will come upon us.

IV. “Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.” “Go and tell.” That suggests very clearly the line of duty. “Go and tell.” The yellow people of the Orient and the black people of Africa, sitting in darkness, groping in shadows of despair, are members of the King’s house-

hold as well as ourselves. But they don't know it and are living in misery and hunger and wretchedness, like the prodigal in the far country; and our Lord lays upon us the solemn responsibility and the glorious privilege of making known to them our good tidings of great joy.

I am glad a mother and daughter in this Church have their missionary substitute in India whose salary they are paying. I am glad the Chinese boys of our Sunday School are supporting a missionary of the Cross in their fatherland out of their scanty earnings. But why should not this congregation have half a dozen substitutes telling the story of Jesus in various parts of the world? This is what all wide-awake, aggressive, Christ-filled Churches are doing. Through their supported representatives they are preaching the Gospel in pagan lands twenty-four hours every day and three hundred and sixty-five days every year; and the effect of it upon their own home Church life is like that of rain upon the parched ground.

I hope no one will raise the old threadbare objection there are heathen enough at home. That statement is utterly and abominably untrue. No doubt there are depraved people, and vicious people, and great numbers of spiritually dead people under the very

shadows of our Churches; but they know what these Churches mean; they know what the Gospel means; they know what Jesus Christ came into the world for, or if they do not, it is because we Christian people have not done our duty; and for pity's sake, for decency's sake, let us not make our neglect of duty at home an excuse for doing nothing abroad.

But it is useless to take time replying to objections. The essence of every objection ever made to this work is lack of the Christian spirit, lack of love, lack of loyalty to the Son of God. But I am persuaded better things of you. I am proud to believe that I minister to an open-handed, big-hearted, broad-minded Christian congregation. I flatter myself that I preach to no pent-up Utica, but to a Church as wide in sympathy as the reach of human needs. Hence it is that I ask you for your offerings to this cause this morning. Anybody can give before Christmas. But to give after Christmas, to give when the purse has been already drained, requires just such stuff as I am sure many of you, and I would fain believe all of you, are made of. Give a great generous contribution to this cause to-day and it will be worth a score of sermons on the evidences of Christianity.

FORGIVENESS AND THE CROSS

FORGIVENESS AND THE CROSS

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”—
EPH. i. 7.

THERE are people who call sin by soft names. Coming short of an ideal, a defect of education, the result of ignorance, missing the mark, and other such euphemisms are applied to it. Mrs. Eddy goes farther and denies that it has any reality whatever. She declares that sin is unknown to truth; that, like sickness and disease, it is only an illusion, and has no existence in fact. But no amount of word-juggling and no tricks of rhetoric can either rob the awful thing of its ugliness or eliminate it from the world. In spite of all the efforts that are made to decorate it with fine phrases and to condone it and make it seem almost virtuous; in spite of the attempts of certain teachers to hoodwink the judgment of men and induce them to take leave of common

sense, sin is the most dreadful, the most persistent, the most deadly fact of which we have any knowledge.

Look around and see and hear and judge for yourselves. Courts for ever busy, prisons for ever full, hearts for ever breaking, homes for ever shadowed—what do all these things mean if sin is not? The scandals and law-suits and frauds and crimes reported every day in every daily paper—are all these things but the out-flowering of illusions? Alas for the human gullibility that can believe such absurdities! Sometimes we look into men's faces on the streets and we see the devil there, and down into their eyes and we see the mud and the treachery there. Sometimes we listen to their talk and we hear words laden with filth and impurity, or perhaps we hear them gloat over the ruin of some fresh young life, and smack their lips over it like a hound that has tasted blood. Sometimes we learn of things done by men, intelligent men, so low, so cruel, so beastly, that we can but blush for our humanity. In the face of all this what shall we say of those who try to conceal sin's hideousness under smooth words, or of those who deny that there is any sin at all?

But we need not look afield. The ugly thing is in our own lives, and so near the surface that it doesn't take much of a scratch to reveal it. Why is it that we find a lurking kind of comfort in the fact that the best people have their weak points? Why is it that a pleasant sort of satisfaction steals into our souls when a rival's reputation is assailed? Why is it that we experience a sort of contentment when a very good man is found to be not quite as good as he was rated to be? Why is it that a real scandal in high life always finds so many readers even among Christian people? The answer to these questions is not at all flattering. It seems to declare plainly that there is something in us that is inherently wrong. Indeed, brethren, if we are perfectly frank with ourselves we shall have to admit that, however it got there, there is a considerable mixture of bad stuff in us.

Let us clear the subject of all fog; let us be straight and honest and candid and confess that we are sinners. If we know anything, we know that we have built with untempered mortar, that we have put unseasoned timber into our lives, that we have often made use of poor material, and that the whole structure is sadly defective. There

is nothing of which we are more certain than the fact of indwelling sin. It was no debauchee, no red-handed criminal, but the saintly and heavenly-minded John who said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It was no wretched prodigal, with life all shattered and wrecked and wasted, but the devoted and unselfish Paul who said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief.*" We are not better than Paul and John. In the category of the sinning every one of us must take his place.

Now, the Bible teaches everywhere, both directly and by implication, that sin must be punished. With scientific precision it declares that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," that men "shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices." Its pages abound in concrete illustrations of the fact that sin cannot be committed with impunity. Let it suffice to recall the examples of Moses and Saul and David and Peter.

Nature teaches the same lesson. No law of mind or of body can be transgressed without penalty. On every side of us, and

in everything we do, we run up against laws which must be obeyed, or we must suffer the consequences. Violate the law of electricity and the mysterious power will strike; the law of fire, and you will be burned; the law of wind and tide, and you will go upon the rocks; the law of gravitation, and you will be hurled into the abyss. Thus the book of Nature, like the Word of God, declares that every transgression and every disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward.

Scepticism speaks to precisely the same effect. Deny whatever else it may, it is clear on this point, that sin must be punished. George Eliot taught that "the world would be indefinitely better and happier if men could be made to feel that there is no escape from the inexorable law that we reap what we have sown."

Now, in the face of this very positive teaching that comes to us from these three sources, and which is so abundantly reinforced by our own observation and experience, what shall we say as to the *forgivableness* of sin? How can we reconcile the certainty of retribution with the doctrine of pardon? Punishment and forgiveness seem to be utterly conflicting ideas. If we

have built with unseasoned timber, and daubed with untempered mortar, can our house be rebuilt, or must we stay in the old structure and take the consequences of our misdoing? That question strikes to the very bottom of evangelical religion.

The Bible answers it in terms too plain to be misunderstood. If it tells us again and again that sin must be punished, it tells us again and again, and in warmer phraseology, if possible, that sin may be forgiven. Here it takes issue squarely with all forms of unbelief. Ingersoll scouted the idea of forgiveness. He says: "I do not believe in forgiveness. If I rob Mr. Smith and God forgives me, how does that help Smith?" and after this jaunty deliverance he adds, "No forgiveness; eternal, inexorable, everlasting justice—that is what I believe in, and if it goes hard with me I shall stand by it, and I will stick to my logic and I will bear it like a man." To this agrees the late Professor Clifford. He asks: "Can the favour of the Czar make guiltless the murder of old men and women and children in Circassian valleys? Can the pardon of the Sultan clean the bloody hand of a Pasha?" And he replies, "As little can any God forgive sins committed against men." Emerson, the

rationalist, took the same position. He found no room in his philosophy for the doctrine of forgiveness.

But the Bible strikes a different note. While it bates not one jot or tittle from the most undeviating justice, while it keeps the scales on an even balance for ever, it rings out the words which have encouraged so many wayward feet to turn homeward, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." It speaks of "subduing iniquity," of "blotting out transgressions," of "casting our sins into the depths of the sea," of "robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." There certainly can be no mistaking the position of the Bible. If it is true sin may be forgiven, the prodigal may come home, the shattered vase may be restored.

What does Nature say? In so far as it speaks at all it chimes in with the Word of God. Sometimes it is said that Nature is inexorable, that there are no traces of mercy in it anywhere, that it knows nothing whatever of pardon. But I do not see it so. Cut a gash in a tree, or a wound in your flesh,

or break a bone, and as soon as the hurt is attended to it begins to heal. Give up foolish eating and drinking, return to a wise and moderate diet, and Nature will kindly do what it can to forgive you and to remove from your system the traces of your folly. It seems to me the larger truth is that Nature is full of healing and mercy. Violate its laws, trample on them, and then quit, and immediately Nature begins the work of reparation. It is just because Nature is so ready to forgive transgression that men are coming to believe that there is no disease for which there is not somewhere a cure. For my part I love to find in God's material universe hints and prophecies of all that I find in the Gospel.

Even society, with all its petty jealousies and small prejudices and diluted Christianity, is learning to forgive sins against itself. Men come forth from prisons reformed and filled with new purpose, to prove by honest and faithful lives that they are changed, and society forgives them. It takes them back and restores them, if not wholly, yet to a large degree of favour. If the forgiveness is not perfect, if there is still a lurking suspicion, the preponderance of feeling is on the side of mercy. It would be strange if

God alone were unrelenting and implacable, but that He is not; that He is a God who loves to pardon, the Bible teaches on a thousand inspiring pages.

But how does God forgive sin? It is a question that leads far into the depths. I can only give to it a very partial answer, for I am not a theologian, but answer enough to thrill and stir our hearts. Our text informs us that we have forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and this is the uniform teaching of Holy Scripture. In other words, forgiveness comes to us through Divine suffering. Now let me ask you to think of that for a moment.

There are people who object to what is known as our sacrificial theology, and not a few refer to it in terms of severe condemnation. It seems to them unreasonable that pardon for sin should be made available only by virtue of the suffering of Christ, and some even go so far as to affirm that the doctrine of a vicarious atonement is fundamentally immoral. But, as another has suggested, if we take the whole matter up into the pure sunlight of the most heavenly conception we can gain of God's character, we shall see how rational and how beautiful it all is. The quality of the

water in the little pool on the shore is the same as that of the water in the ocean. The fire in the gas-jet is the same as the fire that flames in the sun. And the best love of earth is in nowise different, except in degree, from the love of God.

Begin, then, with what we see and know of human love. Set the foot of the ladder there and climb to the heights. Let there be a rupture between friends, let them become alienated from each other, and it is certain that they cannot be reconciled without pain. If the forgiveness is complete it will mean the cross. Try it for yourselves. Go to the man with whom you have been at enmity for years, to the man who has wronged you, and hold out the hand of reconciliation, and see if it does not cost you suffering. Oh, there is nothing harder than forgiveness. It cuts to the very roots, and this, I suppose, is the reason why it is not more common. When a fellow-man does us an injury we are too apt to resent it and to cherish a feeling of vindictiveness. We choose the line of least resistance. But if in the bigness of our hearts we should really forgive him, we could not do it without taking a certain amount of the shame and sorrow of his sin into our own lives.

Take it into the closer and tenderer relations of the home. A boy becomes a wanderer. He runs off into sin. Down and down he goes until he stands with both feet in hell. He is so low, so vile, that he slimes his way with the worm. In his want and shame and wretchedness he resolves to go back to the old roof he had forsaken. He starts, and when he returns he finds that the door has always been kept open; he finds that his father and mother weep for joy and fall upon his neck and kiss him, but he finds also that their heads have grown grey, and that the marks of a great sorrow are in their faces. They have forgiven the prodigal, but oh, those traces of grief, those whitened heads, are the evidences of what it cost them! He does not know, he never can know, the agony they suffered; and that agony was their righteous condemnation, their measureless abhorrence, of his sin. I am not theorising, I am not indulging in mere assertions, but declaring what we all know to be true when I say that no father, no mother, can take back a wicked son without laying their own hearts upon the cross.

Well, this may help us to understand the teaching of our text, that we have forgive-

ness of our sins *through His blood*. If human love must suffer in forgiving, and if through all creation love is the same, why should it be thought a thing incredible or unreasonable that God should suffer in forgiving? Is that which is noble and sublime in an earthly parent unworthy of the great Father of us all? To my mind, the fact that God suffers in forgiving, suffers with a sorrow, an agony, a humiliation of which Gethsemane and Calvary are but faint expressions, is a truth so touching, so appealing, so infinitely attractive, that it is difficult to see why every heart should not be won by it. To consume sin in hell-fire seems to me to be a small estimate of God's hatred and horror of it compared with burning it up in the awful shame and suffering of His own Almighty breast.

But the suffering necessary to forgiveness is not all on one side. In order to weld two pieces of iron both of them must be at a white heat. Even God cannot forgive the man whose heart remains cold and hard and impenitent. Not until the shame of his sin scorches his very soul, not until the hot tears of genuine repentance melt away all rebellion and all indifference, not until he has made full and sincere and penitential

confession, and done everything in his power to undo his wrong, can a man be pardoned and brought into reconciliation. But when a poor sinner comes to that point, if Mr. Smith whom he has robbed is not magnanimous and quick to respond, I would rather go to God's bar as the penitent thief than as the hard, unyielding Mr. Smith.

Here, I think, a sharp distinction ought to be made between forgiveness and the removal of punishment. God through the suffering of the Cross, which is the suffering of the undivided Deity, blots out our sin, but very often sin's fruit remains. He graciously remits our sin, but the poverty of soul, the starved spiritual nature, the reduced volume of being, consequent upon sin, goes with us still. Jerry Macaulay is forgiven, he becomes a most saintly and consecrated follower of Jesus; but he never gets back the years he wasted in debauchery, and never gets away from the marks they left upon him. David was forgiven, but the child of Bathsheba died, and the heart of the Psalmist was wrung and broken. The prophet assured him that because of his sin the sword would never depart from his house, and it never did. Across every bright day there was a cloud. Every sing-

ing bird awakened a memory that was like an arrow in his breast. Underneath all the music of his life there ran a deep minor tone of sorrow. That deed of wickedness continued to haunt him.

The Cross is not a device by which a man can live thirty or forty years in sin, and then turn about and escape the results of his viciousness. If it were men might well sneer at Bible teaching. But it is nothing of the kind. The penitent thief who is saved just as he swings into eternity carries with him the emptiness of the life he has wasted. Heaven will always mean less to him than if he had devoted all his years to God. Paul, speaking of certain careless believers who built upon their foundation wood, hay, and stubble, declares that they shall be saved so as by fire, and *shall suffer loss*.

Shall suffer loss. Who can tell how great? Just inside the gate, when they might have been in the very centre of the city of God. Just saved, barely saved—salvation minus the fulness and the richness and the rewards and the triumph of long and consecrated service. Thank God for the grace that can save a man at the eleventh hour, but eleventh-hour salvation

can never bring a man all that would have come to him if he had started earlier. Such a man as that will have to sail in shallower water and in a smaller boat for ever.

But, it may be asked, if forgiveness does not arrest the operation of law; if it does not cut us off from penalty; if it does not deliver us from the purely natural consequences of sin, of what use is it? Why make so much of pardon if it leaves punishment behind? In reply, it is enough to say, because forgiveness brings peace to the soul, it removes the sting and burden of guilt, it takes us as we are up into fellowship with God, and tunes us to the music of the skies. It sets us right with ourselves and right with our Heavenly Father, and produces the satisfaction that always comes from rightness of attitude. A child becomes disobedient and rebellious. It runs off and gets severely hurt. Then it hastens back to its mother and is promptly forgiven. The hurt is still there; the smart remains; but is it not infinitely easier to bear it in the mother's arms and in the sunshine of the mother's love than it would be to bear it alone and under the frown of her displeasure? So, while sin must be punished, it is one thing to bear the punishment in

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exile and banishment, under the awful shadow of God's displeasure, and an immensely different thing to bear it under the warmth and tenderness of His sympathy, while resting securely in the arms of His love.

This is the kind of forgiveness we have through His blood, and when we enter into its deep places and grasp something of its meaning and think of what it brings us to rather than what it delivers us from, we do not wonder that our hymns are so laden with tributes to the grace of God. The stain can be washed from Lady Macbeth's hand, and the anguish of remorse changed into an anthem of praise. Saul, the red-handed persecutor, may be pardoned, and become Paul, the peerless hero and apostle of God. Bunyan, the profane tinker, whose talk smelled of brimstone, may have his sins blotted out and give to the world a story of the Pilgrim's Progress that will never die. John B. Gough, the drunkard, may have forgiveness through His blood, and be transformed into the matchless advocate of temperance and manhood. Great sinners and small sinners, transgressors of every shade and hue, may have forgiveness, complete, absolute, and eternal—a forgiveness

that comes through the vicarious sufferings of the Cross, which is the suffering of God Himself in Christ Jesus.

The old notion of a God who is impassible and incapable of pain—an unfeeling God—I cannot accept. Such a God as that I cannot preach. He is nothing to me. I cannot call Him Father; for what kind of a father is that who lives above and beyond the hurt of his children? I want a God whose sympathy is equal to His sovereignty; a God so tender, so susceptible, so compassionate, that He feels with me, and for me, and receives upon the shores of His own soul the waves that break across mine; a God not only strong enough to hold the reins of the universe, but a God gentle enough and kind enough to hold me, with all my sins and all my unworthiness, up against His own beating heart. This is the God we have revealed in Jesus Christ, through whose blood, through whose pangs and pains we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

WHERE WE REST OUR FAITH

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“Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.”—
EPH. ii. 20.

THE times are full of intellectual unrest. Old positions, old doctrines, and beliefs are either challenged or rejected altogether. Multitudes have broken with the past, cut their moorings, and drifted out to sea, only to be driven by the wind and tossed. Other multitudes, while they still remain with the old, and still retain their places in the historic Church, are uneasy and uncertain. The prevailing winds that beat upon them are so strong and steady that they are beginning to lean, and it is doubtful whether they have enough strength and depth of root left to hold them from going over. They have seen so many theological positions abandoned since they were children, and so much of the orthodox creeds practically stricken out, that they are asking

with a good deal of emphasis whether there is anything left worth clinging to.

I venture to say that even those of us who hold most strenuously to the faith once delivered to the saints, and to all that system of doctrine that has grown up about it, are more or less affected by this widespread loosening and questioning and breaking up. Sometimes there has crept into our souls the distressing thought of the possibility of a shattered faith and of cherished hopes blown out like a candle in the night. Friends, neighbours, loved ones, men and women of high character and pronounced ability, have gone out from the communion of the Church and the Christianity in which they were reared, out into "the tangle and the storm" of doubt, or out to try some new faith, and in spite of ourselves we have been seriously unsettled and disturbed by it. There has come into our hearts the suggestion that after all they may be right, and that we may be wrong. For some of us there have been times when the intellectual distress arising from this condition of things amounted almost to torture. In this universal unsettlement of religious thought and belief every hard-thinking, serious mind amongst us has more or

less shared. We have wondered sometimes where we would come out, whether on higher ground, and in a clearer atmosphere of Christian faith, or in some boggy swamp-land of atheism and despair.

Now, in such times as these we should studiously and earnestly seek to be clear as to fundamentals. We should think our way through all that is secondary and subordinate to the essential, and hold to that with a grip which nothing can relax or undo. Thoughtful people must do it or make shipwreck of faith and become poor derelicts on life's troubled sea. The reason why there is so much weakness, so much yielding, so much drifting away upon new currents, is because there is so much uncertainty; and uncertainty is the result of resting faith too much on wrong foundations. These foundations go, they are swept away, or if not they are sorely shaken, and the consequence is that the house built upon them is either destroyed or violently shaken also. Instead of building upon the Rock far too many have built upon the traditional material that has been superimposed upon it. Hence when that goes, and is washed down the valleys before the swelling floods of scholarship and investigation, they go too, and in

the drift make fast to any bank where they can find a landing.

This explains the lapses from the faith that have become so common. Instead of fleeing to the citadel, to Jesus Christ Himself, too many take refuge in the outworks. After a while the outworks are assaulted and captured, and, with their defences gone, there is nothing left for people of this kind to do but to go over to the enemy. This also is the reason why *infidelity* has had so large a field to work in. If Church people had always been wise enough to plant themselves upon the Rock, if they had always intelligently built their hopes upon the impregnable Gibraltar of Christianity, which is Jesus Christ Himself, infidelity would long ago have beaten itself to death. But because they foolishly put their trust in little outside stockades and man-made ramparts of doctrine and interpretation, infidelity has found a wide range for the play of its artillery. It has lived and thrived because the Church has given it so much to exercise itself upon.

Now I believe I shall render a real service this morning by pointing out in the first place some of the things upon which, as intelligent Christians, we should not rest our faith; and

in the second place by calling attention afresh to Him who should be the one centre of all our hopes, the one foundation of the house we are building for time and eternity.

I. I begin with the Higher Criticism and with the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. We have heard a great deal about "the mistakes of Moses." We have been told that it is absurd to believe that Moses could have written the account of his own death and gone into all the details of it. We have been told that the book of Genesis contains two independent accounts of the creation; and any one who will read thoughtfully and seriously the first three chapters, without bias, without the prejudice of preconceived notions, without suffering himself to be influenced by long-accepted interpretations, will have to admit that there seems to be something in it. In style, in subject-matter, and in fundamental ideas there is difference enough to at least suggest that there may have been two different authors.

But suppose there were two authors, suppose the composite character of Genesis and the whole Pentateuch is proved beyond a doubt (personally, I do not think it ever will be; but suppose it should)—what will it matter? If the substance of these books is

true, if it commends itself to the universal consciousness, if we have God in the beginning, and God working in and through creation, and God seeking to redeem the sinning world, and God leading His people to the promised land, we need not trouble ourselves about the authorship of the book or books that tell the story. Nobody knows who wrote the book of Job, or wrote half of the Psalms, or who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; but this does not at all affect the truth of these wonderful productions. A book does not get its worth and power from subscribing some human name to it. If Shakespeare's dramas were anonymous they would be no less mighty and tremendous than they are with his signature appended. Eliminate the name of Tennyson from literature and that immortal poem "In Memoriam" would be just as true and telling as ever. Truth needs no human label to commend it, and if truth be lacking, no number of names or labels will suffice to keep a book afloat.

And so we need not worry about the Pentateuch. If it is true, as we believe, it will live if there never had been a Moses. The same thing may be said of the prophecy of Isaiah. The critics assure us that there must have been two Isaiahs. They are very positive

about it. For my part I do not care if there were twenty, so long as they were all in harmony and all pointed forward to the same Messiah. If they differed and clashed and contradicted each other and pointed in different directions, it would be in order to reject them all. But if they all agreed, if they all struck substantially the same note, if the contribution of each chimed in with the contribution of every other, it would be pretty strong evidence that they were all moved by the same spirit and that the burden of what they wrote about was true. And the truth is the main thing. We do not rest our faith on human authorship. I am not saying that I agree with the critics, for I do not; but only trying to make clear that they do not touch the foundation on which we build.

II. Nor do we rest our faith, I hope, upon the mere verbal inspiration of the Bible. Mr. Moody declared that he believed every word of it. But that was a very loose and careless statement. Everybody honoured Mr. Moody for his stalwart evangelicalism and his multitude of good works. His religion had roots and the tree of his life was full of fruit. He was a man of tremendous conviction, and out of that conviction came an earnestness, a

consecration, a practical godliness, that puts us all to shame.

But even Mr. Moody himself could not deny that there are verbal errors in the Bible, wrong words which have found their way in in transcribing and translating. If we could get at the original autographs I have no doubt that we should find them inerrant; but in the absence of that we have to take what has come to us, and it is not free from verbal flaws. The Revised Version makes this plain enough. All Christian students and scholars admit that there are verbal blemishes and imperfections in the Bible, and the one purpose of Revision was to remove these as far as possible. But these errors do not in the least affect the substance of the book, or alter by a single iota its Divine teachings. The truth is still there and can no more be changed than the truth of nature is changed by the constant corrections which science finds it necessary to make in its textbooks. What I want to emphasise is that those who have pinned their faith to the mere words of the Bible, who are committed to the form rather than the substance, to the letter rather than to the spirit, can expect nothing else than to be jolted and shaken and tossed about. They are building on a founda-

tion of sand. But we do not rest our faith there, nor even upon the *plenary* inspiration of the Bible, thoroughly as we accept that. We have something better, something more solid, than the best of books to build upon. Salvation is not in paper and ink.

There are people who imagine that if we are compelled to give up the literal historicity of the story of the Fall, of the origin of the woman from the rib of the man, of the serpent and the apple; and that if we are compelled to give up the exact literal account of Cain and Abel, and of the sons of God coming down and choosing wives from among the daughters of men, and of all the details of the Deluge—they feel that we shall have given up about everything. It seems strange when you come to think about it. They know very well that our Lord's parables are not literal history. They know very well that in verbal form they are mere fiction; but they know also that in substance they are as true as the multiplication table. And yet when some thoroughly devout and godly scholar ventures to suggest that the story of Eden is a parable, or an invention of language to convey a great truth, these earnest souls are shocked. They do not discriminate between the vehicle and the freightage it carries, and

nothing has wrought more mischief than this in religious history. The mere wrappage and investiture of the jewel has been held to be as sacred and inviolable as the interior gem itself, if not a constituent part of it. Any alteration in the tubing, any re-setting, or readjustment of the pipes, has been regarded as a fatal interference with the water from the everlasting hills. It has caused endless trouble, and the last act has not been played out yet.

No wonder that those who commit themselves to the mere clothes of truth, to the changing shell rather than to the abiding kernel, to the mutable windows rather than the immutable light that shines through them—no wonder they are sorely unsettled and disturbed. But intelligent, clear-thinking men and women do not rest their faith upon any such externals. They lay the stress not upon the shape of the loaf, or upon its particular brand, or upon the varying moulds out of which it comes, but upon the Bread of Life itself.

III. Moreover, as thoughtful Christian believers, we do not rest our faith upon any special teaching with reference to the future. We are not saved by eschatology. Some of us can remember the vivid and awful descrip-

tions of hell and the tortures of the damned to which we used to listen long ago. Perdition was pictured in material form, and the punishment of the lost was so represented that it seemed to be physical. But this teaching has all passed away, or if not obsolete it certainly is obsolescent. Not that the substance of it is gone. Not that the certainty of future punishment has been eliminated from our thinking. Not that retribution has been relegated to the region of myth and unreality. Nay, we believe in a hell of conscience, a hell of stinging, biting, burning remorse for the impenitent wrong-doer far more terrible than any hell of material fire that was ever painted—such a hell as burned in the breast of Eugene Aram and Lady Macbeth. I only want you to note what a change has come in the form of this belief.

It used to be taught that there was no hope for those who lived and died in lands where the Gospel was unknown; that the millions of pagan countries who never had an opportunity to hear about the Saviour of the world were doomed; that there was no second chance for those who never had a first chance; that for those who sinned in the ignorance of superstition and in an environment of abomination into which they were

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born and could not help themselves, there was nothing to look forward to but eternal misery and despair. All this used to be urged as a motive for missionary enterprise and in the name of a God of infinite love. But to-day it is practically obsolete. It has yielded to views that are broader and more in accord with the spirit of Christ and His Gospel. The whole Church has come up to higher ground. I refer to it only because I want you to see where we would be if we rested our faith upon any interpretations, or deductions, or teachings concerning the future. Faith must have an immovable foundation, for if it has not it will sooner or later give place to scepticism.

IV. I believe in doctrine, and in the doctrines known as evangelical. If I did not I would not be here. I love to think about them and to preach them. I believe that the great doctrines of Christianity fit into the great facts of human life as the key fits into the lock. To laugh at these doctrines, or to cast them aside, is no evidence of superior wisdom or enlightenment. They are not to be despised. But at the same time they are not to be exalted beyond the place to which they belong. Doctrines are human interpretations of truth, and not necessarily the

truth itself. They partake of the imperfections and fallibilities of the human minds that have worked them out. Their gold is not without the alloy of human weakness and human prejudice. This being the case, we should remember that they are susceptible of constant change and improvement.

And they are changing. They are undergoing constant modification and revision. It is impossible not to see it. Within the last fifty years there have been the most decided doctrinal changes as to the method of creation, as to the literary structure of the Bible, as to future punishment, as to the scope and nature of the Atonement, and as to the whole system of Christian belief. Silently, steadily, irresistibly these changes have gone on. Increase of knowledge is always a troublesome thing. It disturbs and unsettles and upsets. It plays havoc with those who build upon the mutable and the shifting. It cuts the props from under them and lets them down into the rushing stream.

And such is the unhappy plight of those who build upon doctrine. I might illustrate it by referring to the Atonement. You know that there are several theories as to this great vital truth of Christianity. There is the governmental theory, that Christ died to

promote the highest welfare of the subjects of God's moral government; and the moral influence theory, that He died simply to win men by the force of His sublime example; and the vicarious theory, that He died in the room and stead of sinning men; and the mystical theory, that He came into the world to reconcile God and man by His incarnation rather than by His death on the cross. In addition to these there is the limited theory, that Christ died only for the elect, and I know not how many more.

Now, you can easily understand what must be the condition of those who rest their faith upon these theories of the schools, as they see them changing and yielding to better interpretation and broader scholarship. It weakens, it discourages, and in all too many cases drives men over into downright scepticism. But if we are as intelligent, as thoughtful, as wise as we ought to be, we do not build there. That is not our corner-stone. We believe that all these theories added together are too small to cover the great fact of the Atonement. We believe that Christ crucified is infinitely more than any theory of His atoning sacrifice. We believe that a man may be a devout and earnest Christian without knowing anything at all about these

theories; that He may be a most consecrated disciple without being able to explain the *how* of salvation. All he may be able to do is to fall back on the words of Paul and say, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and rose again according to the Scriptures."

On that Rock we build, and not on doctrines and definitions, and interpretations, and authorships, good as they are in their place. The nature of the awful tragedy on Calvary is a mystery. There are meanings in it too deep for us; but we can understand something of the personal Christ. We think of Him living for men, sympathising with men, dying for men—dying for us—and we love Him. We bring to Him our wounded hearts, our pricked consciences, our sin-laden souls, and we find pardon and peace. Our Gospel is the gospel of a person, and that Person is God manifest in the flesh, God stooping to human infirmity, incarnate Love making of itself a way for every poor wanderer to return home. On that Rock we build.

Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the light of our life, the spring of our hope, the centre and substance of our faith. So long as He remains we care not what else may go; and He will remain as certainly as He is God

the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If the Bible stands it will stand because He stands. If doctrines and creeds and confessions survive, they will survive because they are vitally related to Him. If our peculiar standards and tenets and ecclesiastical furniture continue to float, it will be because they are in the ship with Jesus. If our little systems go, let them go, as long as He is left—

“Our little systems have their day—
 They have their day and cease to be;
 They are but broken lights of Thee,
 And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.’

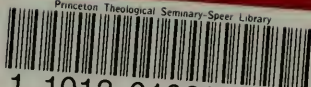
You cannot bound Christ by words and definitions. You cannot fence Him within any sectarian enclosures. You cannot set Christ in any little niche of theology, to be looked at and measured like a lay figure, any more than you can bottle up the sunshine and confine it within a given compass. Put all our theories, all our creeds, all our systems and theologies on one side of the equation, and then put Christ on the other, and it would be like setting a small mill-pond over against the Atlantic Ocean. I am not making light of these systems and efforts of the human intellect. They are not to be despised. My sole purpose is to lead you to the citadel,

to show you that Jesus is everything. On that Rock we build. I want you to follow Him in life, in thought, in study, in devotion; to love with His love, to sorrow with His grief, to rejoice with His joy, to be brothers to all to whom He became brother, and to go where He would go with your sympathy and service.

THE END



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